

OCONEE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

415 South Pine Street - Walhalla, SC



TEL (864) 638-4218 FAX (864) 638-4168

AGENDA

6:00 pm- Monday, November 4th- 2019

Council Chambers - Oconee County administrative complex

1. Call to Order
2. Invocation
3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. Public Comment for Non-Agenda Items (3 minutes per person)
5. Planning Commissioner response
6. Approval of minutes from 10/21/2019 AM & PM meetings
7. Review of the draft 2030 Comprehensive Plan
 - a. Public Comment
 - b. Discussion / Vote
8. Corridor Plan working group
 - a. Public Comment
 - b. Discussion / Vote
9. Unfinished Business
10. New Business
11. Adjourn

Anyone wishing to submit written comments to the Planning Commission can send their comments to the Planning Department by mail or by emailing them to the email address below. Please Note: If you would like to receive a copy of the agenda via email please contact our office, or email us at achapman@oconeesc.com.

OCONEE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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TEL (864) 638-4218 FAX (864) 638-4168

Minutes

12:00 pm- Monday, October 21st - 2019

Council Chambers - City of Clemson Administrative Complex
1250 Tiger Boulevard Clemson, SC 29631

Attending:

Gwen McPhail
Frankie Pearson
Mike Johnson
Mike Smith
Andy Gramling

Staff:

Adam Chapman
Vivian Kompier

1. Call to Order – 12:00pm
2. Common opportunities and challenges –
Mr. Steadman from the Clemson Planning Department updated everyone about the student rental housing in Clemson (See handouts attached).

Discussed as well: a bypass over/around Clemson, a way to get students from Seneca to Clemson without using Hwy 123, parking, and dropping the speed limit on 123 in Seneca.

All agreed that there should be quarterly meetings between Oconee County Planning and Clemson City Planning. Next meeting after the 1st of January.

3. Adjourn – 1:40pm

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OCONEE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

415 South Pine Street - Walhalla, SC



TEL (864) 638-4218 FAX (864) 638-4168

Draft Minutes

6:00 pm- Monday, October 21, 2019

Council Chambers - Oconee County administrative complex

Members Present

Mike Johnson

Frankie Pearson

Mike Smith

Andrew Gramling

Gwen McPhail

Stacey Lyles

Staff Present

Adam Chapman

Vivian Kompier

Media Present

Caitlin Harrington - The Journal

1. Call to Order - Mr. Pearson called the meeting to order at 6:00pm
2. Invocation by Ms. Lyles
3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. Public Comment for Non-Agenda Items (3 minutes per person)
Mr. Barnett has issues with the Agricultural Advisory Board.
5. Approval of minutes from 10/07/2019 – One minor correction – Mr. Barnett is “pleased”. Ms. McPhail made a motion to approve and Mr. Johnson seconded and was approved 6/0.
6. Authorization for Vivian Kompier to review and sign plats on behalf of the Planning Commission –
 - a. Public comment – None
 - b. Discussion/Vote -
Ms. McPhail made the motion to approve, Mr. Smith seconded and was approved 6/0.
7. Comprehensive Plan - Agricultural Element
 - a. Public Comment –
Mr. Barnett spoke about the Land Use element. Farm land is one of his bank accounts and no one can take his bank account.
Mr. Gary Owens spoke for Advocates for Quality Development, Inc. (AQD). The Planning Commission did a great job with the Comprehensive Plan and all the community outreach. The group encouraged the Commission & Staff to move forward and implement the goals and strategies.
Ms. Linda Lovely wants to see more of building codes department out looking at homes, as before zoning the homes were built substandard.

- b. Land Use Element
 - i. Discussion – There was much discussion regarding the colors used in the Future Land Use Map.
 - ii. Vote –
 - Page 11-6/B – A motion was made by Mr. Johnson to change the word **“blueprint” to “reference”, seconded by Ms. McPhail and approved 6/0.**
 - Page 11-6/B - Take out second sentence – Mr. Johnson made a motion to take out the second sentence **“Implementation...Regulations.”, seconded by Ms. Lyles and approved 5/1.**
 - Page 11-6 – Rural – A motion was made by Mr. Johnson to change Rural to Rural/Agricultural and after the word **lifestyle add “lifestyle, farming, agricultural activities”. Also after commercial uses add “small businesses” Also, take out “that serve as a hub of activity in the area.”** seconded Ms. McPhail and approved 6/0.
 - Page 11-6 Rural Suburban – A motion was made by Mr. Johnson to add the words **“and farming.” after rural landscape, seconded by Mr. Gramling and approved 6/0.**
 - FLUM – Ms. Lyles made a motion to change the area from Westminster to Seneca purple/orange, seconded by Mr. Johnson and approved 6/0.
 - Ms. Lyles made a motion to change Rural (beige) to green with green stipes, seconded by Mr. Gramling and approved 6/0.
 - Page 11-13 Goals -
 - Ms. McPhail made a motion to switch Strategies 11.1.3.1 and 11.1.3.3, seconded by Ms. Lyles and approved 6/0.
 - c. Review of Goals, Objectives & Strategies for Implementation from all elements
 - i. Discussion – There was discussion about changing dates for completion, adding/removing a column.
 - ii. Vote –
 - A motion* was made for a 5-minute break by Ms. McPhail, seconded by Mr. Johnson, approved by all.
 - A motion* was made by Mr. Smith to reconvene, seconded by Mr. Johnson and approved by all.
 - A motion* was made by Mr. Smith to take out the Time Frame for Completion column completely, seconded by Mr. Gramling and a vote of 3/3 was made and not approved.
 - A motion* was made by Ms. Lyles to change the **column title “Time Frame for Completion” to “Time Frame for Evaluation”** and add a column titled **“Date of Completion”**, seconded by Ms. McPhail and approved 6/0.
 - d. Directive to Staff to compile 2020 Comprehensive Plan draft –
 - i. Discussion – None
 - ii. Vote – Ms. McPhail made a motion to approve, seconded by Ms. Lyles and approved 6/0.
8. Corridor Planning Sub-Committee –
- i. Discussion – Mr. Chapman recommend that a sub-committee be formed for the implementation of the Corridor Plan.
 - ii. Vote – Mr. Smith made a motion to have a sub-committee, seconded by Ms. McPhail – Motion was withdrawn. Ms. Lyles made a motion to table this

discussion until we know how many members there will be and who, seconded by Mr. Johnson and approved 6/0.

9. Ten At The Top / LKSWPT – Mr. Smith attended and said it was a very informative meeting, a great presentation with audience participation.
10. Commissioner attendance for the balance of the year – Please let staff know by the end of the week if you will be missing any meetings.
11. Unfinished Business - None
12. New Business – None
13. Adjourn – The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:05pm.

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The goals, objectives and strategies for implementation (GOIS) table summarizes the actions that will be undertaken in the coming decade to achieve the goals and objectives identified in each element.

2. POPULATION

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Goal 2.1. Improve the quality of life for existing and future residents of Oconee County.			
Objective 2.1.1. Increase understanding of the County's population composition and characteristics.			
<u>Strategy 2.1.1.1.</u> Monitor demographic patterns in the County and its municipalities in order to respond to growth and the changing needs of residents, especially special populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County Service Providers 	2023	
<u>Strategy 2.1.1.2.</u> Coordinate and collaborate with regional agencies and neighboring jurisdictions to share demographic data and update population projection data and methodologies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County ACOG Neighboring Jurisdictions 	Annually	
Objective 2.1.2. Encourage and attract young adults and families to remain in Oconee County.			
<u>Strategy 2.1.2.1.</u> Create economic opportunities for residents and potential residents through recruitment and retention of industries and businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County Upstate SC Alliance Chamber of Commerce Clemson University 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 2.1.2.2.</u> Develop and promote policies and programs that improve economic opportunity for residents and potential residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County Municipalities 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 2.1.2.3.</u> Develop opportunities to provide or encourage entertainment and recreation options that are attractive to young adults and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County Municipalities 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 2.1.2.4.</u> Interface with the Oconee County School District (SDOC), private schools, Clemson University, and Tri-County Technical College (TCTC) to optimize educational quality and access to advanced training opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County SDOC Private Schools TCTC Clemson University Inter-regional Education Center representative 	2023	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Objective 2.1.3. Assess and seek to address the needs of the County's alternative populations.			
<p><u>Strategy 2.1.3.1.</u> Seek partnerships to assess the unmet needs of alternative populations and develop strategies and leverage resources to address these needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • State and Local Agencies • Non-profits • Interfaith Ministries 	Annually	
<p><u>Strategy 2.1.3.2.</u> Provide opportunities for local service agencies and organizations to explore efforts to prevent and eliminate homelessness and provide needed services for the County's homeless population.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • United Way • Local Service Agencies and Organizations • Faith-based Organizations 	Annually	
<p><u>Strategy 2.1.3.3.</u> Reduce language barriers in the provision of health care, public safety, and other public services to all Oconee County residents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Health Providers • Other Public Service Providers 	2025	
<p><u>Strategy 2.1.3.4.</u> Assess measures to accommodate the needs of the County's aging population in areas such as signage, lighting, and transportation options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • CAT Bus Service 	2025	
Goal 2.2. Promote a livable community in which County residents are healthy, supported, and productive.			
Objective 2.2.1. Ensure access to adequate health care and preventative services.			
<p><u>Strategy 2.2.1.1.</u> Coordinate the provision of a continuum of supportive services, home repair programs, and infrastructure that enable elderly residents to <i>age in place</i> to the extent possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Council on Aging • Faith-based Organizations • Oconee County DSS • Oconee County DSNB • YMCA • SDOC 	2025	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<p><u>Strategy 2.2.1.2.</u> Support access to adequate health care facilities and services for all segments of the population to reduce the incidence and high costs associated with chronic health conditions for local residents, especially geriatric care and accessible care for veterans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee Memorial Hospital/Prisma Health • County Health Department • DSNB • Rosa Clark Free Medical Clinic • YMCA • SDOC • Nonprofits 	<p>Annually</p>	
<p><u>Strategy 2.2.1.3.</u> Provide a range of fitness and recreational opportunities that encourage health and well-being and that also safely accommodate residents with disabilities, older adults, youth, families, and other special needs populations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SDOC • YMCA 	<p>2025</p>	
<p>Objective 2.2.2. Promote educational attainment and job readiness among County residents.</p>			
<p><u>Strategy 2.2.2.1.</u> Create a safe and healthy environment for education and socialization for students at all levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SDOC • TCTC 	<p>2023</p>	
<p><u>Strategy 2.2.2.2.</u> Support and promote workforce development programs that address the skilled labor needs of current and potential employers in the County in trades, high tech, and high demand pathways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Worklink WIA • SDOC • TCTC • Oconee Adult Education • Local Employers 	<p>2021</p>	
<p><u>Strategy 2.2.2.3.</u> Support local efforts to raise literacy levels of County residents through afterschool programs, family and early literacy efforts, and church-based programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SDOC • Oconee County Adult Education/Literacy Program • Faith-based Providers 	<p>2026</p>	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Goal 2.3. Foster a high level of efficiency, coordination, and cooperation among County and municipal services.			
Objective 2.3.1. Coordinate planning efforts among the County, municipalities, and neighboring jurisdictions.			
<u>Strategy 2.3.1.1.</u> Review and/or update the County’s Population Element at least once every five years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2023	
<u>Strategy 2.3.1.2.</u> Coordinate service delivery planning among the County, municipalities, and neighboring jurisdictions to eliminate duplication of effort and address long-term needs of residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Utilities • Neighboring Jurisdictions • ACOG 	2025	
<u>Strategy 2.3.1.3.</u> Foster on-going coordination and communication among Oconee County, municipalities, and neighboring jurisdictions on a wide range of issues including land use planning and regulation, facilities planning, transportation, and the extension and upgrade of utilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • ACOG • Neighboring Jurisdictions • Utility Providers • Nonprofits 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 2.3.1.4.</u> Review current land use planning, building codes, zoning and development regulations, and other County ordinances for potential impact on population growth and special populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2022	

3. HOUSING

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Goal 3.1. Encourage a broad range of housing opportunities and a balance of housing types to meet the current and future needs of Oconee County residents.			
Objective 3.1.1. Promote the development of a diverse housing stock to meet the needs of residents and accommodate a variety of economic levels, occupations, age groups, and lifestyle preferences.			
<u>Strategy 3.1.1.1.</u> Encourage the development of a range of housing types and densities to include single-family, site-built homes; patio homes, multi-family developments, and manufactured homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Residential Developers 	2021	
<u>Strategy 3.1.1.2.</u> Encourage housing development that will accommodate residents of all ages and stages of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Residential Developers 	2025	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<u>Strategy 3.1.1.3.</u> Review and amend land use plans and regulations, relevant policies, and proposed residential developments, to ensure compatibility between new residential developments and existing agricultural uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2021	
<u>Strategy 3.1.1.4.</u> Review and amend land use plans and regulations to identify and remove possible barriers to the development of a variety of housing options and residential development types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2021	
Objective 3.1.2. Encourage housing development that will enable residents to “age-in-place.”			
<u>Strategy 3.1.2.1.</u> Work with public and private agencies and organizations to assess the housing and associated needs of senior citizens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • ACOG • Oconee County Senior Center • Senior Solutions • Other Public and Private Organizations 	2023	
<u>Strategy 3.1.2.2.</u> Encourage and promote housing development that will allow the County's older residents to age in place such as higher density single-family and multi-family developments, assisted living, and nursing facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Assisted Living Providers • Residential Developers 	2023	
Goal 3.2. Promote and enhance access to affordable, safe, and decent housing for all Oconee residents through public and private cooperation.			
Objective 3.2.1. Encourage the provision of affordable, safe, and decent housing.			
<u>Strategy 3.2.1.1.</u> Encourage and promote programs that provide assistance and education on the responsibilities and requirements of homeownership to potential homeowners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDA Rural Development • Financial Institutions • Habitat for Humanity • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2025	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<p><u>Strategy 3.2.1.2.</u> Encourage and promote the development of housing options that are affordable for low- and middle-income families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDA Rural Development • Residential Developers • Habitat for Humanity • Community Non-profits • Oconee County • Municipalities 	<p>Annually</p>	
<p><u>Strategy 3.2.1.3.</u> Encourage infill housing development on vacant properties in developed residential areas already served by infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Residential Developers 	<p>2025</p>	
<p><u>Strategy 3.2.1.4.</u> Work with the State and other organizations to identify and secure funding for housing and neighborhood rehabilitation for declining and unsafe residential areas through the public, non-profit, and private sectors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Residential Developers 	<p>2021</p>	
<p><u>Strategy 3.2.1.5.</u> Work to encourage affordable housing development in Opportunity Zones identified in Oconee County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • ACOG • Financial Institutions • Community Non-Profits • S.C. State Housing Finance and Development Authority • HUD • Municipalities 	<p>2023</p>	
<p><u>Strategy 3.2.1.6.</u> Protect existing neighborhoods from incompatible uses that could reduce safety and lower property values through consistent enforcement of zoning and subdivision regulations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	<p>Annually</p>	
<p><u>Strategy 3.2.1.7.</u> Promote and encourage development within defined Opportunity Zones featuring either mixed use or affordable housing elements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Financial Institutions • U.S. Senators from S.C. 	<p>Annually</p>	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Objective 3.2.2. Work with the State, municipalities, neighboring communities, and other public and private organizations to remove barriers to, and identify solutions for, the provision of affordable housing.			
<u>Strategy 3.2.2.1.</u> Encourage the expansion of water and sewer infrastructure and facilities to increase opportunities for new residential development and provide service for existing residential areas that are currently unserved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Water and Sewer Providers • S.C. Dept. of Commerce 	2023	
<u>Strategy 3.2.2.2.</u> Work with local, State, and Federal agencies to identify and reduce or remove barriers to housing affordability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • State and Federal agencies 	2025	
<u>Strategy 3.2.2.3.</u> Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions to address the provision of low- and moderate-income workforce housing on a regional scale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Neighboring Counties • ACOG 	2025	
<u>Strategy 3.2.2.4.</u> Work with the State Housing Authority and other relevant agencies to assess the extent of the shortage of housing affordable for low and moderate-income residents in the County and identify potential possible solutions to alleviate the shortage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • State Housing Authority • Clemson University 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 3.2.2.5.</u> Review and amend land use and development regulations and other relevant requirements and procedures to remove potential barriers and provide incentives for the provision of safe, decent, and affordable housing options for Oconee County families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	Annually	
Goal 3.3. Provide appropriate housing and associated services, assistance, and access to resources for Oconee County residents with special needs.			
Objective 3.3.1. Assess and address the housing and associated needs of the County's special populations.			
<u>Strategy 3.3.1.1.</u> Support and encourage participation in the annual Point-in-Time Homeless count to determine the extent of homelessness in Oconee County in the effort to prevent and eliminate homelessness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • United Housing Connections • Local Service Providers 	Annually	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<u>Strategy 3.3.1.2.</u> Work with local agencies and service providers to explore options for providing short-term and permanent housing and associated services for homeless veterans in Oconee County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • United Housing Connections • Local Service Providers • Oconee County Veterans Affairs 	2022	
<u>Strategy 3.3.1.3.</u> Encourage cooperation between agencies, non-profits, and private developers to meet the housing needs of other special populations such as individuals with special needs and victims of domestic violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and Local Agencies • Residential Developers • Oconee County • Municipalities 	Annually	

4. ECONOMIC

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Goal 4.1. Increase the County’s tax base through a thriving and diversified economy.			
Objective 4.1.1. Strengthen Oconee County as an employment center.			
<u>Strategy 4.1.1.1.</u> Maintain economic incentives for new and expanding industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • SC Dept. of Commerce 	2021	
<u>Strategy 4.1.1.2.</u> Maintain communication with existing business and industry to assess the local business climate, public services, workforce quality, and potential areas for improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Industrial Group (OCIG) • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 4.1.1.3.</u> Continue to develop the I-85 industrial corridor with associated infrastructure to support fully utilized industrial parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Utility Providers • Upstate SC Alliance • SC Dept. of Commerce 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 4.1.1.4.</u> Promote the inventory of industrial sites and buildings in Oconee County with an emphasis on vacant and certified industrial sites and parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • SC Dept. of Commerce • ACOG 	2025	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Strategy 4.1.1.5. Recruit new industry to the County and assist in expansion of existing employers in the target sectors of advanced manufacturing, biosciences, automotive, and energy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • SC Dept. of Commerce 	Annually	
Strategy 4.1.1.6. Continue to support the Oconee Economic Alliance as the primary entity to represent the County and pursue industrial development with broad-based public and private representation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • SC Dept. of Commerce 	Annually	
Objective 4.1.2. Balance support for retention, expansion and recruitment of businesses.			
Strategy 4.1.2.1. Strengthen relationships and partnerships among the County, civic organizations, municipalities, educational institutions, service agencies, and the private sector to support economic development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Chamber of Commerce • OCIG • SDOC • TCTC 	Annually	
Strategy 4.1.2.2. Maintain a formalized business and retention program (BRE) dedicated to existing employers in Oconee County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • OCIG • Municipalities 	2025	
Strategy 4.1.2.3. Conduct annual visits and tours of County industrial facilities to establish and maintain rapport and working relationships with existing businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • OCIG • Workforce Development Partners 	Annually	
Strategy 4.1.2.4. Develop and coordinate positive economic and business messages and case studies and marketing for local, regional, and national media outlets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • OCIG • Employers • Media 	2025	
Goal 4.2. Improve the skills, productivity, and economic competitiveness of the Oconee County workforce.			
Objective 4.2.1. Increase employer satisfaction with workforce readiness.			
Strategy 4.2.1.1. Align workforce development and training programs with economic development efforts to include targeted industries, current and projected workforce needs and provide robust apprentice and internship opportunities in a wide variety of County businesses and industries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC/TCTC • WorkLinks • ApprenticeshipSC • Employers • Clemson University 	2023	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Strategy 4.2.1.2. Work to improve the completion rate including alternative credit sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDOC 	Annually	
Objective 4.2.2. Raise incomes and earnings potential of the County workforce.			
Strategy 4.2.2.1. Increase the number of jobs with higher than average County wages and demand outlook.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • SC Dept. of Commerce 	Annually	
Strategy 4.2.2.2. Prepare Oconee County graduates and residents for high demand, higher wage careers and occupations, equipping them with the training and education to apply their skills in a broad and diverse economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC • TCTC 	2021	
Strategy 4.2.2.3. Increase access to local employment opportunities that can reduce overall commuting distance and costs for residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • SC Dept. of Commerce 	2021	
Strategy 4.2.2.4. Support and promote the continued expansion of the consolidated Oconee County Workforce Development Center Campus at the Oconee Industrial and Technology Park to include Tri-County Technical College and the new School District Career Center.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC/TCTC • Business/ Industry 	2023	
Strategy 4.2.2.5. Add defined career pathways for existing and projected opportunities in sectors including advanced manufacturing, automotive, healthcare, entrepreneurship, retail, hospitality, and biosciences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDOC • TCTC • Workforce Development Partners 	2025	
Strategy 4.2.2.6. Leverage corporate giving by employers for academic, career, and cultural enrichment programs that raise college and work readiness of County students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate and Community Foundations • SDOC/TCTC 	2025	
Goal 4.3. Increase business and commercial activity in priority areas.			
Objective 4.3.1. Strengthen downtown commercial districts.			
Strategy 4.3.1.1. Promote the development of downtown retail and commercial niche markets in Seneca, Walhalla, West Union, Westminster, and Salem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Oconee County • Chamber of Commerce 	2025	
Strategy 4.3.1.2. Promote policies that preserve and promote the unique nature of downtowns, key buildings, streets, and public spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Oconee County 	Annually	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<u>Strategy 4.3.1.3.</u> Identify and inventory commercial and industrial infill and greyfield sites throughout the County and prioritize for reuse and redevelopment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Oconee County 	2023	
<u>Strategy 4.3.1.4.</u> Explore local incentives for location of businesses and industries in existing properties and the use of infill properties such as tax or fee reductions or zoning incentives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Oconee County 	2025	
<u>Strategy 4.3.1.5.</u> Establish a county-wide loan pool, in partnership with area banks, focused on downtown revitalization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Oconee County • Chamber of Commerce 	2023	
Objective 4.3.2. Foster a climate of entrepreneurial activity and small business success.			
<u>Strategy 4.3.2.1.</u> Support small business start-up and expansion and assist in clearing key steps in the development and start-up process to include permitting and inspections, licensing, and eligibility for State and local incentives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Small Business Development Center (SBDC) • Chamber of Commerce • Tri-County Entrepreneurial Development Corporation (TCEDC) 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 4.3.2.2.</u> Establish and maintain local business incubation capabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SBDC/Clemson University • Chamber of Commerce • TCEDC 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 4.3.2.3.</u> Support efforts to expand the reach and economic impact of the <i>Think Oconee</i> buy local campaign throughout the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Chamber of Commerce 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 4.3.2.4.</u> Explore the benefits of <i>Certified Connected Community</i> status.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Utility Providers • Telecommunication Providers 	2025	
<u>Strategy 4.3.2.5.</u> Identify projects and promote Opportunity Zone incentive areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Objective 4.3.3. Leverage the County’s cultural, historic, agricultural, and natural resources as economic assets.			
<u>Strategy 4.3.3.1.</u> Continue implementation of the <i>Destination Oconee</i> plan objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2023	
<u>Strategy 4.3.3.2.</u> Capitalize on the local traditional arts, culture, and heritage of the County as an economic opportunity for small business development, downtown revitalization, and tourism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Chamber of Commerce • Arts and Cultural Groups • Festival and Event Organizers 	2025	
<u>Strategy 4.3.3.3.</u> Support economic development activity that leverages the assets and strengths of the County’s rural areas to include agribusiness and agritourism, outdoor recreation, heritage tourism, and eco-tourism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SBDC • Chamber of Commerce • TCEDC 	2023	

5. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Goal 5.1. Protect the historic and cultural heritage of Oconee County, as embodied and reflected in its historic structures, sites, and districts.			
Objective 5.1.1. Emphasize the importance of historic and cultural resources in the policies, plans, and ordinances of local governments to ensure that the unique character of the County is preserved and enhanced.			
<u>Strategy 5.1.1.1.</u> Identify and address the protection of historical and cultural resources through County and municipal land use plans and regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2025	
<u>Strategy 5.1.1.2.</u> Enhance the visual and aesthetic character of the County and its municipalities using codes enforcement, architectural review boards, and other measures as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2021	
<u>Strategy 5.1.1.3.</u> Survey, list, and record the County’s archaeological and historical assets, and inventory and add potential sites within the County that have historical and cultural significance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SC Archives and History • Property Owners 	2020	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Objective 5.1.2. Protect local sites, structures and districts which represent or reflect elements of cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history at the community, County, regional and state levels.			
<u>Strategy 5.1.2.1.</u> Promote the on-going improvement and maintenance of property condition and appearance of historic structures and districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Nonprofits • Property Owners/ Businesses • Neighborhood Associations 	2021	
<u>Strategy 5.1.2.2.</u> Encourage the adaptive reuse of historic or architecturally significant buildings that connect the County and its communities with their histories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Property Owners 	2025	
<u>Strategy 5.1.2.4.</u> Explore the purchase and adaptive reuse of the Utica Mill site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • City of Seneca • Private Businesses/ Nonprofits 	2021	
<u>Strategy 5.1.2.5.</u> Educate the public and businesses on the economic and cultural benefits of historic preservation and available incentives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2025	
<u>Strategy 5.1.2.6.</u> Work with the School District of Oconee County School and private schools to establish and deliver programs on historic preservation and community history.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDOC • Private and Home Schools 	2030	
Goal 5.2. Strengthen countywide access, involvement, and appreciation of the arts.			
Objective 5.2.1. Strengthen the creative capacity of the community by providing all County residents with diverse opportunities for arts participation.			
<u>Strategy 5.2.1.1.</u> Encourage residents to connect with one another and their communities through a strong awareness of and commitment to local history and historic places, as well as a deep appreciation for the arts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC • Museums and Historic Sites 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 5.2.1.2.</u> Increase the awareness of Oconee County residents of all ages and income levels in visual, performing, and literary arts, and cultural programming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine/ Performing Arts Centers • SDOC • Other Cultural and Arts Groups 	Annually	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<p><u>Strategy 5.2.1.3.</u> Support the School District of Oconee County and community arts groups in maintaining a comprehensive arts program in local schools, including the Arts-in-Education programs to expose students to a lifetime of visual and performing arts, music, and creative writing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDOC • Oconee County • Artists and Arts Groups • Employers 	2025	
<p><u>Strategy 5.2.1.4.</u> Enable residents of all ages to acquire knowledge and skills in the arts by supporting arts projects that address lifelong learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDOC • Cultural and Arts Groups 	Annually	
<p><u>Strategy 5.2.1.5.</u> Promote opportunities for volunteerism and sponsorships of tourism, cultural, and recreational offerings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Cultural Organizations • Businesses/ Employers 	Annually	
<p>Objective 5.2.2. Strengthen the creative and operational capacity of existing community arts and cultural organizations.</p>			
<p><u>Strategy 5.2.2.1.</u> Increase local arts funding by supporting arts organizations in federal and state grants applications, as well as corporate and private funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Private Businesses/ Nonprofits 	2030	
<p><u>Strategy 5.2.2.2.</u> Maximize funding from sources including the National Endowment for the Arts, the S.C. Arts Commission, the S.C. Humanities Council and the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Cultural and Arts Groups 	2030	
<p><u>Strategy 5.2.2.3.</u> Continue to support cultural and arts venues through annual appropriation of accommodations tax revenues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2030	
<p><u>Strategy 5.2.2.4.</u> Encourage volunteer involvement in cultural programming, organizations and events by community, faith-based, and civic groups, as well as businesses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural and Arts Groups • Faith-based Organizations • SDOC • Civic and Community groups 	Annually	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Goal 5.3. Leverage the County’s historic and cultural assets as an economic development resource.			
Objective 5.3.1. Integrate the County’s heritage into the overall economic development process, especially as it relates to building a cultural tourism industry.			
<u>Strategy 5.3.1.1.</u> Maintain and communicate a shared vision and guiding principles for tourism and recreation development in Oconee County among the public and private sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Museums/Arts Organizations • Business Owners • Oconee Chamber of Commerce 	2021	
<u>Strategy 5.3.1.2.</u> Increase awareness of the rich genealogical resources in Oconee County as a means to attract additional heritage tourists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Museums 	2030	
<u>Strategy 5.3.1.3.</u> Ensure the County’s visibility in the regional tourism market to support sustainable tourism development and make the County a destination for cultural enrichment, leisure, entertainment, and the arts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcountry SC Tourism Association • Visit Oconee SC • Oconee Chamber of Commerce • Oconee County 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 5.3.1.4.</u> Recognize, build upon and promote the County’s historic and cultural assets with agricultural, Colonial and Civil War, African-American, Native American (Cherokee), and Appalachian themes through local historical and arts institutions and programming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Museums/Arts Organizations • Business Owners • Upcountry SC/Visit Oconee SC 	2025	
Objective 5.3.2. Support employers engaged in the cultural and heritage tourism, agritourism, and nature-based tourism sectors.			
<u>Strategy 5.3.2.1.</u> Pursue additional SCPRT and other grants for local governments and non-profits to supplement promotional efforts in tourism marketing for festivals, attractions, and events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Oconee County • Cultural Organizations 	2030	
<u>Strategy 5.3.2.2.</u> Launch hospitality and tourism sector training and workforce development to support excellence in quality of services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDOC • TCTC • Oconee Chamber of Commerce • Employers 	2025	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<u>Strategy 5.3.2.3.</u> Collaborate with the private sector to expand local shopping, dining, and lodging amenities as an important means of capturing tourist dollars.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee Chamber of Commerce • Oconee County • Municipalities • Business Owners 	2021	
<u>Strategy 5.3.2.4.</u> Preserve the culture and identity tied to agriculture and the landscape of the County’s rural communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Farms and Agribusinesses • Land Conservation Groups 	2023	

6. NATURAL RESOURCES

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Goal 6.1. Protect and improve air quality in Oconee County.			
Objective 6.1.1. Continue to support local, regional, and state plans and initiatives related to air quality.			
<u>Strategy 6.1.1.1.</u> Continue coordination and partnership in the S.C. Early Action Ozone Reduction Compact with other jurisdictions in the Appalachian COG Region, adopting and maintaining ozone-reducing reduction strategies as necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Appalachian COG (ACOG) • ACOG Counties • SCDHEC and EPA 	2030	
Goal 6.2. Preserve, protect, and enhance Oconee County’s land resources.			
Objective 6.2.1. Promote partnerships and voluntary conservation easements to preserve significant lands, habitats, and scenic areas under development pressure.			
<u>Strategy 6.2.1.1.</u> Support existing land conservation organizations in their efforts to preserve and protect rural lands, sensitive areas, and significant natural resources and transfer of development rights and conservation easements to protect rural lands, sensitive areas, and significant natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Soil and Water Conservation District • Land Trusts and Conservation Organizations 	2030	
<u>Strategy 6.2.1.2.</u> Provide appropriate assistance from County departments and agencies in efforts to identify and preserve significant lands, and scenic areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<p><u>Strategy 6.2.1.3.</u> Support efforts of public and private organizations to protect critical habitats in Oconee County through conservation easements and other measures as appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Property/Business Owners • Conservation Organizations • SCDNR • Keowee-Toxaway Habitat Enhancement Program 	2025	
<p>Objective 6.2.3. Manage natural assets to ensure natural resources enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors and increase economic opportunities.</p>			
<p><u>Strategy 6.2.3.1.</u> Protect and preserve natural resources for recreational use and develop new opportunities for recreational access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SCDNR • SCPRT • USFS 	Annually	
<p><u>Strategy 6.2.3.2.</u> Work with public conservation partners to identify additional significant natural resources including viewsheds and habitats that warrant protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Conservation Organizations • SCDNR • SCPRT • USFS 	2021	
<p><u>Strategy 6.2.3.3.</u> Promote parks and recreation facilities, both public and private, as part of a comprehensive countywide recreation system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SCDNR • SCPRT • USFS 	2023	
<p><u>Strategy 6.2.3.4.</u> Expand and maintain public parks and recreation spaces to a uniform standard of excellence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SCDNR • SCPRT • USFS 	Annually	
<p>Objective 6.2.4. Continue to promote reasonable access to Oconee County's public natural amenities for residents and visitors.</p>			
<p><u>Strategy 6.2.4.1.</u> Encourage compatible land use adjacent to National and State Forests, wildlife management area, and County, State and municipal parks to protect such lands from incompatible uses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2030	
<p><u>Strategy 6.2.4.2.</u> Review existing regulations and policies to identify barriers and additional opportunities to protecting current natural areas and open space.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2030	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Strategy 6.2.4.3. Encourage and support efforts by public and private organizations to provide public access when conserving open space, natural areas and scenic vistas in Oconee County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Property Owners • Conservation Organizations 	Annually	
Strategy 6.2.4.4. Work with community partners to promote programs for residents of all ages to discourage littering and encourage participation in litter pickup programs and initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Keep Oconee Beautiful Assn. • SDOC • Local Civic Groups 	2023	
Goal 6.3. Preserve, protect, and enhance the quality and quantity of the water resources of Oconee County.			
Objective 6.3.1. Expand sewer service to additional areas as feasible.			
Strategy 6.3.1.1. Support wastewater treatment providers in the extension of sewer service to currently unserved or underserved areas to minimize the need for septic tanks where conditions are not suitable or water sources may be compromised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority (OJRSA) • Municipal Providers • Other Public and Private Providers 	2025	
Strategy 6.3.1.2. Support wastewater treatment providers in the upgrade and expansion of existing treatment facilities to accommodate the expansion of sewer service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • OJRSA • Municipal Providers • Other Public and Private Providers 	2023	
Objective 6.3.2. Monitor, maintain and improve water quality and quantity to meet the needs of County residents, employers, and institutions.			
Strategy 6.3.2.1. Partner with adjacent jurisdictions on comprehensive water studies detailing availability of all water sources, usage, and outflow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Adjacent Jurisdictions • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	2025	
Strategy 6.3.2.2. Explore local and regional strategies to minimize non-point source pollution and institute Best Management Practices for the protection of water resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Utility Providers • SCDHEC • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	Annually	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<u>Strategy 6.3.2.3.</u> Support and coordinate with SCDHEC to mitigate identified water quality impairments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Utility Providers • NPDES Permitted Dischargers • SCDHEC • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	2021	
<u>Strategy 6.3.2.4.</u> Utilize incentives, technical assistance, and regulations to promote sustainable environmental best practices by individuals, businesses, and developers to maintain and improve water quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Property Owners and Developers • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	2030	
<u>Strategy 6.3.2.5.</u> Study the potential water quality impact of higher-density residential development near the lakes and explore options for mitigating any negative impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Developers • SCDHEC • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) • Duke Energy 	2025	
Objective 6.3.3. Encourage development practices that protect and preserve water resources.			
<u>Strategy 6.3.3.1.</u> Establish strategies and adopt measures necessary to create a framework for the efficient implementation of erosion and sediment control regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Soil & Water conservation district 	2030	
<u>Strategy 6.3.3.2.</u> Develop a County stormwater management program to prepare for efficient and cost-effective implementation in the event of Federal designation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2025	
Objective 6.3.4. Manage water quantity and quality to ensure efficient utilization and appropriate conservation of the County's water resources.			
<u>Strategy 6.3.4.1.</u> Participate in and support regional efforts to protect watersheds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SCDHEC • Public and Non-profit Organizations • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 6.3.4.2.</u> Explore partnerships to develop a master plan for preserving the watershed areas surrounding our lakes including Keowee, Jocassee, and Hartwell.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers • SCDHEC 	2021	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Strategy 6.3.4.3. Identify and explore ways to protect the water quality of lesser known waterways and "hidden gems" such as the Little River in Salem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2022	
Strategy 6.3.4.4. Explore and promote best practices to protect waterways in agricultural and developing areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	2021	
Strategy 6.3.4.5. Support regulatory authorities in their efforts to preserve water quality and habitat through shoreline management policies and regulation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Duke Energy • USCOE • USFS 	2030	
Strategy 6.3.4.6. Work with community partners to provide educational materials on best practices for septic tank maintenance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SCDHEC • Public and Non-profit organizations 	2025	
Strategy 6.3.4.7. Explore options for establishing and protecting riparian buffers and identify waterbodies in need of such protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	2023	
Objective 6.3.5. Minimize flooding risk to County residents and business owners through the protection of floodplains and floodways.			
Strategy 6.3.5.1. Periodically review floodplain regulations and procedures to ensure protection per FEMA requirements and to evaluate conditions that may require more stringent standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	
Strategy 6.3.5.2. Review and update the Oconee County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance as needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	
Goal 6.4. Enhance and promote access to natural resources and associated recreational activities for residents and visitors.			
Objective 6.4.1. Encourage coordination among County and municipal recreation and natural resource managers.			
Strategy 6.4.1.1. Explore opportunities for coordination and cooperation in Oconee County to include planning for and implementing public and private recreation and natural resource programs and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SCDNR • SCPRT • Duke Energy • USFS • USCOE 	2030	



7. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Goal 7.1. Provide adequate, safe, and efficient infrastructure to support current and projected needs.			
Objective 7.1.1. Work to guarantee adequate water distribution systems for present and future development in Oconee County.			
<u>Strategy 7.1.1.1.</u> Work to facilitate the establishment of a partnership with water providers aimed at expanding service into underserved unincorporated areas of the County and to encourage service providers to share resources where possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Other Water Providers 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 7.1.1.2.</u> Partner with municipalities and other providers to inventory the current condition of their water infrastructure systems to determine ability to accommodate future growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Other Water Providers 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 7.1.1.3.</u> Partner with adjacent jurisdictions on comprehensive water studies detailing availability from all sources and usages/outflows.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Adjacent Jurisdictions 	2023	
Objective 7.1.2. Improve and expand wastewater treatment within Oconee County.			
<u>Strategy 7.1.2.1.</u> Expand sewer service throughout areas identified by the Land Use Element as potential areas of development, while implementing appropriate measures to avoid negative impacts on sensitive areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • OJRSA • Other Sewer Providers 	2021	
<u>Strategy 7.1.2.2.</u> Work with neighboring jurisdictions when possible to establish regional efforts to expand sewer service into prime commercial and industrial locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Neighboring Jurisdictions 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 7.1.2.3.</u> Partner with municipalities and the Joint Regional Sewer Authority to coordinate efforts to provide sewer throughout high growth corridors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • OJRSA • Other Sewer Providers 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 7.1.2.4.</u> Establish partnerships with regional, state, and federal agencies to seek and secure funding for wastewater treatment facility upgrade and expansion needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • OJRSA • Other Sewer Providers • Relevant Regional, State and Federal Agencies 	Annually	

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<u>Strategy 7.1.2.5.</u> Encourage septic tank and leach field education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Duke Energy • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers • SCDNR • SCDHEC • Other Potential Partners 	2025	
Objective 7.1.3. Implement the goals, objectives, and implementation strategies of the Community Facilities Element.			
<u>Strategy 7.1.3.1.</u> Determine staff, facility and resource needs and partnerships to implement the Comprehensive Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2020	
<u>Strategy 7.1.3.2.</u> Regularly update and utilize the County Capital Improvements Plan to systematically construct and upgrade facilities identified in the Community Facilities Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 7.1.3.3.</u> Seek alternative funding sources to taxpayer financing of projects such as private partnerships and user-based fees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	
Goal 7.2. Manage community facilities, infrastructure, and public resources in a manner that ensures both current residents and businesses and future generations can enjoy the benefits and opportunities that make Oconee County an attractive and affordable place to live.			
Objective 7.2.1. Seek local, state, federal, and community funding support in efforts to expand and enhance educational opportunities for Oconee County residents.			
<u>Strategy 7.2.1.1.</u> Continue to support and enhance advanced job training and work readiness of residents through state-of-the-art training centers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC • TCTC 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 7.2.1.2.</u> Provide appropriate assistance to the School District of Oconee County in efforts to enhance and upgrade education and educational facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC 	2030	
<u>Strategy 7.2.1.3.</u> Prioritize expansion and upgrades of libraries through the capital improvements plan and coordinate their location with available infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2025	
<u>Strategy 7.2.1.4.</u> Continue cooperative efforts with the School District that optimize resources and result in savings for both.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC 	Annually	
Objective 7.2.2. Upgrade solid waste facilities to improve services and allow for needed upgrades and expansion to provide for anticipated growth.			
<u>Strategy 7.2.2.1.</u> Work to reduce the volume of solid waste through increased recycling and composting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2023	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Strategy 7.2.2.2. Seek out innovative and alternative technologies that provide a long-term solution to current and projected solid waste needs and may also be used in the future to mitigate and reclaim closed facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2025	
Objective 7.2.3. Regularly review public safety needs and enhance facilities as required and needed.			
Strategy 7.2.3.1. Review and upgrade existing emergency facilities plans on a regular basis, implementing established goals in a systematic manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Emergency Services Commission 	Annually	
Strategy 7.2.3.2. Provide local public safety agencies appropriate assistance in obtaining funding to expand and upgrade operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Emergency Services Commission 	Annually	
Strategy 7.2.3.3. Partner with private entities in the development of emergency satellite facilities and specialized response equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Emergency Services Commission 	Annually	
Strategy 7.2.3.4. Continue to conduct regular updates to the County Disaster Preparedness Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Other Relevant Local Agencies 	Annually	
Strategy 7.2.3.5. Work closely with local energy and utility providers and emergency management agencies to ensure coordination in the event of major natural or man-made events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Emergency Services Commission • Energy Providers • Utilities 	Annually	
Strategy 7.2.3.6. Work with communications providers to ensure optimum communications access and speed for emergency services, local governments, businesses, residents, and visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Communications Providers 	Annually	
Strategy 7.2.3.7. Communicate frequently with citizens of County about emergency plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	
Objective 7.2.4. Ensure access to quality and timely health care for all residents and visitors.			
Strategy 7.2.4.1. Review and upgrade County-owned medical and other healthcare facilities as needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	
Strategy 7.2.4.2. Continue to explore ways to increase the efficiency of emergency medical services throughout the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Emergency Services Commission • Oconee EMS 	Annually	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Objective 7.2.5. Strengthen coordination among the County, municipalities, neighboring counties, regional and State agencies, and other public and private organizations.			
<u>Strategy 7.2.5.1.</u> Continue coordination with municipalities, neighboring jurisdictions and the State on matters relating to public safety, homeland security, emergency preparedness, and other matters of regional or statewide importance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Neighboring Jurisdictions • State Agencies 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 7.2.5.2.</u> Continue coordination of the provision of water, sewer, and electricity with municipalities and other public and private providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipal Utility Providers • Public & Private Utilities 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 7.2.5.3.</u> Continue coordination with public and private organizations for the provision of services, programs, and facilities such as those for the elderly, for recreation, and for transportation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Other Public and Private Organizations • ACOG 	Annually	
Objective 7.2.6. Ensure access to quality, lifelong educational opportunities for all residents.			
<u>Strategy 7.2.6.1.</u> Reduce the high school dropout rate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDOC • SC Dept. of Education • SC Dept. of Social Services 	Annually	
Goal 7.3. Preserve, maintain, expand, and promote opportunities for recreation.			
Objective 7.3.1. Provide passive and active recreational opportunities to meet the diverse needs of County residents and visitors.			
<u>Strategy 7.3.1.1.</u> Partner with public and private entities to develop a countywide greenway system that will offer opportunities for nature-based recreation in areas where few currently exist and to connect existing parks to enable safe cycling routes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Other Recreation Providers 	2025	
<u>Strategy 7.3.1.2.</u> Upgrade and maintain County parks and recreation facilities to encourage and promote ecotourism opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2025	
<u>Strategy 7.3.1.3.</u> Evaluate, amend, and implement recreation plans, as necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission • Recreation Task Force 	2030	
<u>Strategy 7.3.1.4.</u> Seek partnerships to explore ways to increase recreational opportunities for children and families throughout the County, such as access to sports venues and programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission • Municipalities • Other Parks and Recreation Providers 	2030	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Strategy 7.3.1.5. Continue cooperative efforts and seek additional opportunities with the YMCA to provide recreational programs for County residents of all ages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC • YMCA 	2025	

8. AGRICULTURAL

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Goal 8.1. Support and Protect the Agricultural Industry in Oconee County.			
Objective 8.1.1. Recognize important agricultural land as a valuable natural resource to protect for future generations.			
Strategy 8.1.1.1. Advocate use of "Best Management Practices" in farmland and forest operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil & Water Conservation Commissions • Oconee County • Clemson Cooperative Extension (CCE) • SC Forestry Commission 	2025	
Strategy 8.1.1.2. Encourage and support collaboration between landowners and public and private agencies in the development of ecologically and economically sound plans for preservation and restoration of farmland and forests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • CCE • Conservation groups 	2025	
Strategy 8.1.1.3. Work with SCDOT and other state and regional agencies to ensure projects for infrastructure facility maintenance and expansion will not be detrimental to the continuation of agriculture and silviculture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SCDOT • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce • Municipalities 	2021	
Strategy 8.1.1.4. Limit non-agricultural development in productive and prime agricultural areas to densities and development patterns that are consistent with the continuation of economically viable agriculture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021	
Strategy 8.1.1.5. Support state legislation that links incentives to continue farming (such as state income tax credits or differential assessment for property taxes and affirmative supports for the business of agriculture) with controls preventing conversion of the recipient's agricultural land to non-farm uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce 	2025	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<p><u>Strategy 8.1.1.6.</u> Seek grants and take advantage of state and federal programs to assist with the purchase of development rights and agricultural easements on prime agricultural land.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce • Conservation groups 	2023	
<p><u>Strategy 8.1.1.7.</u> Ensure that the impacts to adjacent farms and forest land is part of the deliberation and decision making for proposed public projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce 	2021	
<p><u>Strategy 8.1.1.8.</u> Work with the state Real Estate Licensing commission to add an "Agricultural Disclosure Act" to ensure that potential home/land/business purchasers are made aware that agricultural activity is occurring on land adjacent to the purchaser's property of interest.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • State Real Estate Licensing Commission 	2023	
<p><u>Strategy 8.1.1.9.</u> Activate vacant and underutilized County owned property to facilitate a program that invites entrepreneurs, non-profits, residents, and other groups to begin entry-level agricultural businesses, community gardens, and pilot programs for engaging residents in the agricultural processes. <i>(A motion was made but no second and no vote occurred)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • NGO • Not-for-Profit organizations • CCE • Municipalities • Agriculture organizations • School District of Oconee County (SDOC) 	2023	
<p><u>Strategy 8.1.1.10.</u> Create a staff position of Agricultural communication and coordination to coordinate and communicate with farmers, foresters, local governments, agricultural groups, and the public on agricultural and forestry matters. Worded slightly differently than voted upon motion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2023	
<p>Objective 8.1.2. Enhance agricultural operations and opportunities.</p>			
<p><u>Strategy 8.1.2.1.</u> Work with state and federal agencies to attract agribusiness-related grants and revenue sources and support efforts to establish pilot programs related to new agricultural technologies and products.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Strategy 8.1.2.2. Provide appropriate assistance to expand non- traditional and specialty agribusiness opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021	
Strategy 8.1.2.3. Ensure the ability of a farm to have a farm-related business onsite.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021	
Strategy 8.1.2.4. Promote the establishment of new farm enterprises through support of training for interested persons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service 	2023	
Strategy 8.1.2.5. Allow agricultural products processing facilities to locate in areas with convenient access to farms, but ensure that they do not negatively impact rural character or scenic vistas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2025	
Strategy 8.1.2.6. Support South Carolina right-to-farm laws and consider adopting a county right-to-farm policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce 	2021	
Strategy 8.1.2.7. Promote farm stands and farmers markets in rural and urban areas and local food hub(s) with adjoining counties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service • FARM Center 	2023	
Strategy 8.1.2.8. Consider adopting a Voluntary Agricultural and Forestal Areas program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service 	2025	
Strategy 8.1.2.9. Encourage and support programs that educate and engage residents of all ages in aspects of farming and agriculture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee Cooperative Extension Service • Agriculture Advisory Board • Organizations such as FFA and the Oconee Cultivation Project • FARM Center 	2023	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Goal 8.2. Protect Oconee County’s Forest Resources.			
<u>Strategy 8.2.1.1.</u> Maintain an accurate inventory of important forestland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SC Forestry Commission • US Forest Service 	2025	
<u>Strategy 8.2.1.2.</u> Coordinate and plan infrastructure and development to protect forestland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SC Forestry Commission • SCDOT • US Forest Service • Conservation groups 	2025	
<u>Strategy 8.2.1.3.</u> Support efforts to permanently preserve important forestland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SC Forest Commission • US Forest Service • Conservation groups 	2021	
<u>Strategy 8.2.1.4.</u> Work with the Forestry Commission to educate citizens about wildfire hazards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SC Forestry Commission • Rural Fire Departments • US Forest Service • CCE 	2025	
<u>Strategy 8.2.1.5.</u> Consider adopting the International Wildland-Urban Interface Code, or relevant portions, to help mitigate wildfire risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Rural fire departments 	2030	
Goal 8.3. Ensure continuing access to healthy, fresh food.			
Objective 8.3.1. Eliminate food deserts and ensure access to healthy food.			
<u>Strategy 8.3.1.1.</u> Integrate food system policies and planning into County land use, transportation, and capital improvement plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Local food banks • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service • SDOC 	2025	
<u>Strategy 8.3.1.2.</u> Encourage residents to supplement personal food sources with gardening and fresh food preservation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service • SDOC 	2025	
<u>Strategy 8.3.1.3.</u> Recruit, support, and incentivize businesses that provide healthy food choices in all areas of the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce • CCE 	2023	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<p><u>Strategy 8.3.1.4.</u> Revise land use policies to require healthy food access as a part of development standards, prohibit private restrictions that limit gardens, and community gardens, in residential areas when economic incentives are offered by the County to a developer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2023	
<p><u>Strategy 8.3.1.5.</u> Work collaboratively with non-profits and other entities to address the needs of vulnerable populations (e.g. elderly, children, homeless).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Local non-profits • Faith-based community • Farmers’ markets 	2023	
<p><u>Strategy 8.3.1.6.</u> Support new opportunities for distribution of locally and regionally produced food.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2023	
<p><u>Strategy 8.3.1.7.</u> Revise the zoning code to require healthy food access as a part of development standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2023	
<p><u>Strategy 8.3.1.8.</u> Work collaboratively to ensure that regional emergency preparedness programs include food access and distribution and are working toward the goal of establishing regional capacity for feeding the population for 2-3 months in an emergency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SC Emergency Management • Private organizations • NFPO • Disaster relief organizations 	2023	
<p><u>Strategy 8.3.1.9.</u> Educate and assist in mitigating the harmful effects of Climate Change in Oconee County through agricultural means.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC • CCE • Agricultural groups • Private organizations • Municipalities • Conservation groups • Local non-profits • Faith-based community • Farmers’ markets • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce • Local food banks • SC Forestry Commission 	2023	



9. TRANSPORTATION

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Goal 9.1. Plan the location and development of transportation infrastructure to accommodate present and future needs.			
Objective 9.1.1. Develop and implement plans to guide decision-making on transportation issues.			
<u>Strategy 9.1.1.1.</u> Continue regional coordination with the Appalachian COG, municipalities and neighboring counties, and other public and private agencies in matters related to transportation, transit planning, and prioritization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • ACOG • Neighboring Counties • Related Public and Private Organizations 	2025	
<u>Strategy 9.1.1.2.</u> Assign Oconee County planning staff to attend regional transportation planning meetings coordinated by ACOG to provide input from the County’s future land use perspective into the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • ACOG 	2027	
<u>Strategy 9.1.1.3.</u> Commission studies for transportation corridors to examine conditions, seek multi-modal options, increase safety, optimize travel times and access to residential, commercial, recreation, and other essential services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • ACOG • SCDOT • County Transportation Committee 	2025	
<u>Strategy 9.1.1.4.</u> Implement commissioned and in-house studies, in-part or completely. (For example: make CATbus stops safer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Relevant stakeholders 	2025	
Goal 9.2. Upgrade and maintain the County road system in a manner that meets the needs of the growing population and provides safe and efficient routes through the County.			
Objective 9.2.1. Meet current and future need for quality transportation facilities throughout the County.			
<u>Strategy 9.2.1.1.</u> Acquire and allocate C-funds and leverage in-kind resources to maintain and enhance the County road network and supporting infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SCDOT • County Transportation Committee 	2025	
<u>Strategy 9.2.1.2.</u> Develop an ongoing systematic road maintenance and upgrade program based on steady revenue sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<u>Strategy 9.2.1.3.</u> Maintain a priority road upgrade list that addresses existing traffic “bottlenecks” and other traffic issues and reasonably anticipates issues expected to emerge in the coming decade.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2025	
<u>Strategy 9.2.1.4.</u> Explore and adopt appropriate traffic management tools and techniques available through land use regulation that utilize concepts such as limiting the number of curb cuts in high traffic areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2021	
<u>Strategy 9.2.1.5.</u> Prioritize evaluation of all roads within identified potential development areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • County 	2025	
<u>Strategy 9.2.1.6.</u> Continue to require developers to provide traffic studies to determine if a road must be upgraded to safely handle increased traffic loads and to cover the cost of such road upgrades.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2023	
<u>Strategy 9.2.1.7.</u> Enhance communication with local and State departments of transportation on current and proposed projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • ACOG 	2021	
<u>Strategy 9.2.1.8.</u> Upgrade County roads that were built prior to current standards and align roads that pose safety hazards, if feasible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	
Goal 9.3. Provide a safe, efficient, and accessible multi-modal transportation system.			
Objective 9.3.1. Provide and maintain a safe, efficient, and interconnected roadway network.			
<u>Strategy 9.3.1.1.</u> Encourage connected street systems within new developments and between new and existing developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2023	
<u>Strategy 9.3.1.2.</u> Explore incentives or requirements that increase the connectivity of local, connector, and arterial components of the County’s roadway network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Developers 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 9.3.1.3.</u> Examine the need and feasibility of providing alternative-fuel stations at relevant County-owned properties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • ACOG 	2025	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Objective 9.3.2. Provide and maintain adequate, safe, and accessible trails, sidewalks and bicycle lanes in appropriate areas to promote alternative modes of travel by residents and visitors and to promote ecotourism opportunities.			
<u>Strategy 9.3.2.1.</u> Provide and encourage pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between existing and planned residential, parks and recreation areas, trails, public facilities, and commercial and industrial uses that will enable alternative transportation opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Developers • Municipalities • Trail and Park Providers 	2023	
<u>Strategy 9.3.2.2.</u> Develop standards that encourage developers to incorporate sidewalks and bicycle trails and lanes into residential developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021	
<u>Strategy 9.3.2.3.</u> Seek funding opportunities to create nature trails, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and other facilities designed to make communities more walkable, reduce vehicular traffic, and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SCPRT • Community Partners 	2023	
<u>Strategy 9.3.2.4.</u> Find and repair any conflicts that exist within the current code of ordinances to provide and maintain adequate, safe, and accessible trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021	
Objective 9.3.3. Continue to evaluate and fund public transportation in urbanizing areas of Oconee County, expanding as needed to provide for ongoing growth and development.			
<u>Strategy 9.3.3.1.</u> Promote and assist in the establishment of commuter parking lots to encourage ride sharing and decrease traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2025	
<u>Strategy 9.3.3.2.</u> Continue to partner with Clemson Area Transit to provide existing service levels, while exploring opportunities to expand modes of public transportation such as van services and other non-traditional forms of mass transit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Clemson Area Transit • Community Partners 	2025	
<u>Strategy 9.3.3.3.</u> Seek and secure methods of expanding public transportation in remote areas for clients of facilities such as SCDSS, hospitals, medical complexes, government facilities, and parks and recreation facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Clemson Area Transit • Community Partners 	2025	
<u>Strategy 9.3.3.4.</u> Evaluate environmental and economic impacts and explore efforts to establish high-speed rail through the County, including rail stops in Clemson, SC and Toccoa, Georgia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Neighboring Counties 	2025	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Strategy 9.3.3.5. Seek and establish appropriate methods of mass transit that will promote and enhance tourism such as water taxis, tour boats, and other modes that allow tourists and residents to enjoy natural resources without substantial traffic increases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Oconee SC • Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission • Oconee County 	2025	
Strategy 9.3.3.6. Support municipalities in their efforts to establish public transportation, while seeking options to expand service into unincorporated areas of the County as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Clemson Area Transit • Municipalities • Community Partners 	2025	
Strategy 9.3.3.7. Work with public transportation providers to increase their rideshare and coverage to impact as many potential riders as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • City of Seneca • Clemson Area Transit 	2023	
Goal 9.4. Provide a state-of-the-art regional airport for residents, businesses and industries, and visitors to the County and region.			
Objective 9.4.1. Continue upgrades to the Oconee County Regional Airport in a manner that serves existing clientele and establishes the facility as one of the premier small airports in the nation.			
Strategy 9.4.1.1. Complete planned upgrades, including relocation of roads, strengthening of runway, and other necessary improvements as funding becomes available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC Aeronautics Commission • Oconee County • Public/Private partnerships 	2025	
Strategy 9.4.1.2. Develop an on-going capital improvements program aimed at upgrading the Airport facilities to attract use by additional employers and potential occupants of the business parks in the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC Aeronautics Commission • Oconee County 	2025	
Strategy 9.4.1.3 Seek and establish ways to utilize the Airport to foster partnerships with Clemson University in areas such as hanger lease agreements and facility use agreements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC Aeronautics Commission • Oconee County 	2025	
Strategy 9.4.1.4 Identify Federal and State funds for investment in airport enhancements, including additional hangar space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC Aeronautics Commission • Oconee County 	2025	
Strategy 9.4.1.5. Seek public/private partnerships to fund airport operations and expansions, including additional hangar space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC Aeronautics Commission • Oconee County • Public Private Partnerships 	2025	



10. PRIORITY INVESTMENT

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Goal 10.1. Identify and prioritize long range public infrastructure and facilities needs.			
Objective 10.1.1. Continue to plan for and prioritize public infrastructure and facilities needs.			
Strategy 10.1.1.1. Continue to update the County's Five-Year Capital Plan as part of the annual budget process to provide the highest level of service and facilities for Oconee County citizens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2025	
Strategy 10.1.1.2. Review, update, and adopt the Infrastructure Master Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Strategy 10.1.1.3. Utilize the County's Five-Year Capital Plan to systematically construct and upgrade facilities identified in the Infrastructure Master Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2030	
Strategy 10.1.1.4. Create and update plans and cost estimates that address specific infrastructure priorities with accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Strategy 10.1.1.5. Establish programs to review all existing community facilities to determine needed upgrades resulting from both the aging of the facilities and the population growth of Oconee County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2030	
Strategy 10.1.1.6. Prioritize infrastructure and facilities needs and capital investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Objective 10.1.2. Continue a comprehensive capital projects planning and implementation process to address future conditions and needs.			
Strategy 10.1.2.1. Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves our natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Strategy 10.1.2.2. Manage development in a manner that ensures our natural resources and lifestyle enhance sustainable economic growth and job opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Strategy 10.1.2.3. Promote and enhance access to affordable housing through both public and private cooperation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County Housing Developers 	Annually	
Strategy 10.1.2.4. Upgrade solid waste facilities to improve services and allow for needed upgrades and expansion to provide for anticipated growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2030	
Strategy 10.1.2.5. Regularly review public safety needs and enhance facilities as required and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
needed.			
<u>Strategy 10.1.2.6.</u> Work to address the age-related challenges and needs that may arise among Oconee County’s aging population, particularly focusing on issues not adequately dealt with by state and federal programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Aging Services • Faith-based Communities • Healthcare Providers 	2025	
<u>Strategy 10.1.2.7.</u> Upgrade and maintain the County road system in a manner that meets the needs of Oconee County’s growing population and provides safe and efficient routes through the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SCDOT • ACOG 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 10.1.2.8.</u> Continue to evaluate and fund public transportation in urbanizing areas of Oconee County, expanding as needed to provide for ongoing growth and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • CATbus • SCDOT • ACOG 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 10.1.2.9.</u> Expand bicycle and pedestrian routes to allow for greater use of alternative forms of transportation and to promote ecotourism opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SCDOT • ACOG • Municipalities 	2030	
<u>Strategy 10.1.2.10.</u> Continue upgrades to the Oconee County Airport in a manner that not only serves existing clientele, but establishes the facility as a premier small airport.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2030	
<u>Strategy 10.1.2.11.</u> Promote a countywide arts program to facilitate an appreciation for the arts and other cultural facilities in Oconee County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Arts Organizations • SDOC 	2030	
<u>Strategy 10.1.2.12.</u> Conserve and protect features of significant local, regional, and national interest, such as scenic highways, state parks, historic sites, and expand efforts to promote these features for tourism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SCPRT • SCDOT • Historic Preservation Organizations 	2025	
<u>Strategy 10.1.2.13.</u> Maintain and update the County’s geographic information system (GIS) and related data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	
Objective 10.1.3. Support adjacent jurisdictions and relevant agencies in planning for future public infrastructure and facility’s needs.			
<u>Strategy 10.1.3.1.</u> Support and participate in the efforts of Oconee County municipalities in planning for future public infrastructure and facilities needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	Annually	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.3.2.</u> Support and participate in the efforts of adjacent and relevant jurisdictions in planning for future public infrastructure and facilities needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Neighboring Counties and Municipalities • State and Federal Agencies • ACOG 	2025	
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.3.3.</u> Support and participate in the efforts of relevant agencies in planning for future public infrastructure and facilities needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC • TCTC • Cultural Organizations • Utilities • Aging and Social Services providers • Healthcare providers 	2030	
<p>Goal 10.2. Pursue funding and partnerships to support identified public infrastructure needs.</p>			
<p>Objective 10.2.1. Explore and evaluate alternative methods of obtaining revenue and grant monies to fund capital improvement and new infrastructure.</p>			
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.1.</u> Identify and work to establish alternative revenue sources such as special tax districts and the local option sales tax.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2025	
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.2.</u> Broaden utilization of grants to assist with capital projects and leverage existing resources to provide matching funds for grant opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2030	
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.3.</u> Explore and pursue other revenue sources such as user-based fees, impact fees, and other sources to help fund infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.4.</u> Work with state and federal leaders to change formulas for state and federal funding that rely on Census figures that fail to account for the large percentage of non-resident property owners that strain public resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2025	
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.5.</u> Encourage and seek partnership opportunities to eliminate unnecessary redundancies, strengthen funding proposals, and establish public/private partnerships to meet public infrastructure and facilities needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Adjacent/ Relevant Jurisdictions and Agencies • Private Industries 	Annually	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Goal 10.3. Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions and relevant agencies in planning for capital improvements.			
Objective 10.3.1. Notify and coordinate with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies when recommending projects for the expenditure of funds for public infrastructure and facilities.			
<u>Strategy 10.3.1.1.</u> Improve communication and cooperation between the County and municipalities, state and federal agencies, and other public and private entities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 10.3.1.2.</u> Coordinate with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies on updates to the Oconee County <i>Priority Investment Element</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Adjacent/ Relevant Jurisdictions and Agencies 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 10.3.1.3.</u> Notify and coordinate with appropriate adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies when recommending public infrastructure and facilities projects that require the expenditure of public funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Adjacent/ Relevant Jurisdictions and Agencies 	2030	
<u>Strategy 10.3.1.4.</u> Consider relevant existing plans from adjacent jurisdictions and relevant agencies when recommending public infrastructure and facilities projects that require the expenditure of public funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2030	

11. LAND USE

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Goal 11.1. Establish an efficient, equitable, and mutually compatible distribution of land uses that complements Oconee County’s traditionally rural lifestyle, yet supports sustainable economic development, protects the environment, and manages future growth and changes.			
Objective 11.1.1. Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves the County’s natural resources.			
<u>Strategy 11.1.1.1.</u> Review and update existing land use regulations as needed to facilitate development that preserves forests, prime agricultural lands, sensitive areas, and natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Strategy 11.1.1.2. Explore ways to incorporate procedures, guidelines, requirements, and educational programs that will protect natural resources from incompatible or potentially harmful land uses without unduly limiting growth and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Objective 11.1.2. Manage development in a manner that ensures the County’s natural resources and lifestyle enhance sustainable economic prosperity while respecting private property rights.			
Strategy 11.1.2.1. Utilize the zoning process to enhance development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Strategy 11.1.2.2. Coordinate urban/suburban development in Oconee County to ensure adequate infrastructure is in place to support balanced growth in primary growth areas, while minimizing urban sprawl and protecting natural resources, prime agricultural lands, and sensitive areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Strategy 11.1.2.3. Review and consolidate land use regulations to improve clarity, remove duplication, ensure consistency, and streamline review and administration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Strategy 11.1.2.4. Use incentives, tools, and regulatory options for reducing and preventing conflict between incompatible land uses and reducing such issues in high growth areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Strategy 11.1.2.5. Use corridor overlays, design guidelines, and performance standards to ensure the protection of the environment, community appearance, and property values while respecting private property rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Strategy 11.1.2.6. Address on-premise and off-premise signs, and billboards, and their life-safety and visual impacts along roadways in the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2025	
Strategy 11.1.2.7. Identify the location and density of RV parks within the County to determine if additional regulation is needed to manage traffic, ensure health and safety, and address environmental impacts, with particular emphasis on waterbodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2021	
Strategy 11.1.2.8. Enable and promote the development of cluster subdivisions, with design features incorporating site amenities and resources such as open space, greenways, and wetland preserves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2025	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Strategy 11.1.2.9. Consider requiring landscaping and buffer provisions for new non-residential development along specific corridors and within specific areas of the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2022	
Strategy 11.1.2.10. Encourage landscaping, beautification, and repair of properties through volunteer community programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2022	
Objective 11.1.3. Protect agricultural land through preservation and land use strategies designed to mitigate higher density residential and commercial development of rural farmlands.			
Strategy 11.1.3.1. Map prime and functioning agricultural properties to determine areas that may request protection from incompatible uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2021	
Strategy 11.1.3.2. Implement as feasible the incorporation of voluntary mechanisms such as the use of conservation easements, purchase of development rights, and transfer of development rights to preserve agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Strategy 11.1.3.3. Utilize the zoning process to accommodate appropriate development as requested.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Objective 11.1.4. Address the changes and emerging needs of areas transitioning to a more intensive land use.			
Strategy 11.1.4.1. Develop additional corridor plans focused on safety and design issues but with additional focus on reducing visual blight and inappropriate and incompatible development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2025	
Strategy 11.1.4.2. Develop overlay districts, primarily along principle community entrances (highway corridors) to meet the individual needs of each district in areas such as signage, appearance, transportation needs, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2021	
Strategy 11.1.4.3. Promote development that is consistent with the scenic character of S.C. Hwy. 11 through the incorporation of a corridor overlay, conditional use provisions, or other mechanisms; and explore ways to preserve and maintain tree lines and scenic vistas along S.C. Hwy. 11.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2021	
Strategy 11.1.4.4. Continue to work with the OJRSA and other infrastructure providers on expansions to serve residents and businesses and provide opportunities for economic growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County OJRSA Infrastructure providers 	Annually	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
Strategy 11.1.4.5. Seek resources, plan for, and implement the innovative development and redevelopment of unincorporated areas such as Fair Play, Oakway, Newry, and Utica.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Strategy 11.1.4.6. Continue to seek new opportunities to coordinate, collaborate, and cooperate with municipalities, adjacent jurisdictions, and associated agencies and organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County Municipalities Adjacent jurisdictions Agencies and organizations 	Annually	
Objective 11.1.5. Enable and promote a range of housing choices to meet the needs of residents that accommodate a variety of economic levels, age groups, and preferences.			
Strategy 11.1.5.1. Work with developers and other public and private agencies and organizations to encourage and enable development of affordable housing options to meet current and projected housing needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County Developers Public and private agencies and organizations 	Annually	
Strategy 11.1.5.2. Work with developers and other public and private agencies and organizations to encourage and enable the redevelopment and revitalization of dilapidated and unsafe housing in declining residential areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County Developers Public and private agencies and organizations 	Annually	
Strategy 11.1.5.3. Encourage new and innovative approaches to residential development that will expand housing options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually	
Objective 11.1.6. Expand and promote opportunities for recreation and access to natural resources and greenspaces.			
Strategy 11.1.6.1. Work with the State, Sumter National Forest, Duke Energy, the Army Corps of Engineers, and other organizations to provide reasonable and safe access to the County's lakes and rivers for residents and visitors while protecting private property rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County State of South Carolina Sumter National Forest Duke Energy U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Other related organizations 	Annually	
Strategy 11.1.6.2. Explore partnerships and alternative methods of connecting residential, employment, recreation, other essential services, and communities such as greenways and trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County Municipalities 	Annually	



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation	Date Completed
<u>Strategy 11.1.6.3.</u> Continue to seek and utilize resources and partnerships to connect to regional trail and park systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • State of South Carolina • Park and trail providers 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 11.1.6.4.</u> Continue to cultivate eco-tourism opportunities in key areas such as near the new mountain bike facility at Stumphouse Tunnel and planned expansions of County parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • State of South Carolina • Sumter National Forest 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 11.1.6.5.</u> Seek opportunities to increase greenspaces, to include exploring requiring open space/greenspace as a component of new development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	
Objective 11.1.7. Continue support of a comprehensive planning process to ensure that the citizens of Oconee County possess accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions and the opportunity to better manage future conditions.			
<u>Strategy 11.1.7.1.</u> Review and update the components of the Oconee County Comprehensive Plan as needed, not restricted to the minimum time periods established in the S.C. Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act, as amended.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 11.1.7.2.</u> Expand public access to the County's geographic information system (GIS), emphasizing the accuracy and maintenance of data collected and the usability of the GIS website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	
<u>Strategy 11.1.7.3.</u> Utilize Assessor's data and GIS technology to better track development trends for use in planning for future growth and change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually	





Oconee County, South Carolina

Comprehensive Plan 2030

Adopted by County Council _____

12 Months

49 meetings

500 attendees

600 written comments

1100 Surveys

This plan was made by the people of Oconee County and for the people of Oconee County.

United States Bill of Rights

Amendment I Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Amendment II A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.

Amendment III No soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

Amendment IV The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Amendment V No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a grand jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the militia, when in actual service in time of war or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

Amendment VI In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the state and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

Amendment VII In suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise reexamined in any court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

Amendment VIII Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

Amendment IX The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

Amendment X The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people

South Carolina Right to Farm Act

Title 46 - Agriculture

CHAPTER 45.

NUISANCE SUITS RELATED TO AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS

SECTION 46-45-10 Legislative findings.

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) The policy of the State is to conserve, protect, and encourage the development and improvement of its agricultural land and facilities for the production of food and other agricultural products.

(2) When nonagricultural land uses extend into agricultural areas, agricultural operations often become the subject of nuisance suits and as a result (a) agricultural facilities are sometimes forced to cease operations, and (b) many persons are discouraged from making investments in farm improvements or adopting new technology or methods.

(3) This chapter is enacted to reduce the loss to the State of its agricultural resources by limiting the circumstances under which agricultural facilities and operations may be considered a nuisance.

(4) The purpose of this chapter is to lessen the loss of farmland caused by common law nuisance actions which arise when nonagricultural land uses expand into agricultural areas. This purpose is justified by the stated social desire of preserving and encouraging agricultural production.

(5) With the exception of new swine operations and new slaughterhouse operations, in the interest of homeland security and in order to secure the availability, quality, and safety of food produced in South Carolina, it is the intent of the General Assembly that state law and the regulations of the Department of Health and Environmental Control pre-empt the entire field of and constitute a complete and integrated regulatory plan for agricultural facilities and agricultural operations as defined in Section 46-45-20, thereby precluding a county from passing an ordinance that is not identical to the state provisions.

SECTION 46-45-20. Definitions.

(A) For purposes of this chapter, "agricultural facility" includes, but is not limited to, any land, building, structure, pond, impoundment appurtenance, machinery, or equipment which is used for the commercial production or processing of crops, trees, livestock, animals, poultry,

honeybees, honeybee products, livestock products, poultry products, or products which are used in commercial aquaculture.

(B) For purposes of this chapter "agricultural operation" means:

- (1) the plowing, tilling, or preparation of soil at the agricultural facility;
- (2) the planting, growing, fertilizing, or harvesting of crops, ornamental horticulture, floriculture, and turf grasses;
- (3) the application of pesticides, herbicides, or other chemicals, compounds, or substances to crops, weeds, or soil in connection with the production of crops, livestock, animals, or poultry;
- (4) the breeding, hatching, raising, producing, feeding, keeping, slaughtering, or processing of livestock, hogs, aquatic animals, equines, chickens, turkeys, poultry, or other fowl normally raised for food, mules, cattle, sheep, goats, rabbits, or similar farm animals for commercial purposes;
- (5) the production and keeping of the honeybees, the production of honeybee products, and honeybee processing facilities;
- (6) the production, processing, or packaging of eggs or egg products;
- (7) the manufacturing of feed for poultry or livestock;
- (8) the rotation of crops;
- (9) commercial aquaculture;
- (10) the application of existing, changed, or new technology, practices, processes, or procedures to an agricultural operation;
- (11) the operation of a roadside market; and
- (12) silviculture.

(C) For purposes of this chapter "new swine operations" means: porcine production operations not in existence on June 30, 2006.

(D) For purposes of this chapter, "new slaughterhouse operations" means agricultural operations that:

- (1) are established after this chapter's effective date; and

(2) slaughter or process more than two hundred million pounds of livestock, hogs, aquatic animals, equine, chickens, turkeys, poultry, or other fowl normally raised for food, mules, cattle, sheep, goats, rabbits, or similar farm animals for commercial purposes.

(3) a new slaughterhouse operation does not include a slaughterhouse located within the corporate limits of a city that relocates within that same county.

SECTIONS 46-45-30. Repealed 63)by Section 47-20-165(E).

SECTION 46-45-40. Established date of operation.

For the purposes of this chapter, the established date of operation is the date on which an agricultural operation commenced operation. If the physical facilities of the agricultural operation are expanded subsequently or new technology adopted, the established date of operation for each change is not a separately and independently established date of operation and the commencement of the expanded operation does not divest the agricultural operation of a previously established date of operation.

SECTION 46-45-50. Liability for pollution and flooding.

The provisions of section 46-45-70 do not affect or defeat the right of a person to recover damages for any injuries or damages sustained by him because of pollution of, or change in condition of, the waters of a stream or because of an overflow on his lands.

SECTION 46-45-60. Local ordinances to contrary null and void.

(A) Notwithstanding any local law or ordinance, an agricultural operation or facility is considered to be in compliance with the local law or ordinance if the operation or facility would otherwise comply with state law or regulations governing the facility or operation. With the exception of new swine operations and new slaughterhouse operations, to the extent an ordinance of a unit of local government:

(1) attempts to regulate the licensing or operation of an agricultural facility in any manner that is not identical to the laws of this State and regulations of the Department of Health and Environmental Control and amendments thereto;

(2) makes the operation of an agricultural facility or an agricultural operation at an agricultural facility a nuisance or providing for abatement as a nuisance in derogation of this chapter; or

(3) is not identical to state law and regulations governing agricultural operations or agricultural facilities, is null and void. The provisions of this section do not apply whenever a nuisance results from the negligent, illegal, or improper operation of an agricultural facility.

The provisions of this section do not apply to an agricultural facility or agricultural operation at an agricultural facility located within the corporate limits of a city.

(B) The provisions of this section shall not preclude any right a county may have to determine whether an agricultural use is a permitted use under the county's land use and zoning authority; provided, if an agricultural facility or an agricultural operation is a permitted use, or is approved as a use pursuant to any county conditional use, special exception or similar county procedure, county development standards, or other ordinances that are not identical with the laws of this State or the regulations of the Department of Health and Environmental Control are null and void to the extent they (a) apply to agricultural operations or facilities otherwise permitted by this chapter, the laws of this State, and the regulations of the Department of Health and Environmental Control, and (b) are not identical to this chapter, the laws of this State, and the regulations of the Department of Health and Environmental Control.

SECTION 46-45-70 Established agricultural facility as nuisance; changed conditions in surrounding locality.

No established agricultural facility or any agricultural operation at an established agricultural facility is or may become a nuisance, private or public, by any changed conditions in or about the locality of the facility or operation. This section does not apply whenever a nuisance results from the negligent, improper, or illegal operation of an agricultural facility or operation.

SECTION 46-45-80. Setback distances; waiver.

Any setback distances given in R. 61-43, Standards for Permitting of Agricultural Animal Facilities, are minimum siting requirements as established by the Department of Health and Environmental Control. The department may require additional setback distances on a case-by-case basis considering the factors set forth in the regulation. Such distances may be waived or reduced by written consent of the adjoining property owners, or otherwise without consent of the adjoining property owners, when there are innovative and alternative technologies approved by the department pursuant to the Innovative and Alternative Technologies Section of R. 61-43. All agricultural animal facilities affected by these setback provisions must have a vegetative buffer between the facility and the affected residence as established by DHEC unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the adjoining landowners.

2030 Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary

A message to the residents of Oconee County

Oconee County has prepared a new Comprehensive Plan that guides the County's growth and development decisions over the course of the next 10 years. The Plan is required, by State law, to be revised after five years. The Plan is a living document and should be updated regularly as conditions change and shifts occur in public policy. The Plan serves the County and participating municipalities as an advisory document regarding actions or policies which will promote preferred goals related to economic development, land use, transportation, housing, quality of life and other interrelated topics.

Primary input for the Comprehensive Plan was developed by input from the residents. Over the course of seven months, nine public outreach meetings were held in all five voting districts. Approximately 500 citizens attended these meetings and 250 comments were received. Five surveys were included as supplements to the Upstate Journal which resulted in over 1,100 completed surveys with an additional 350+ survey comments. In short, the County reached out for citizen input using radio and newspaper advertisements. The following pages describe the results of public participation that informed and guided this planning document.

The Comprehensive Plan is the County's principle guiding or vision document – designed to formulate a coordinated, long-term planning program to maintain and enhance the managed growth and viability of the County. The Plan lays out the desired future for the County and relates how that future is to be achieved. The Plan serves as a resource to both the public and private sector by projecting how land will develop, housing needs met, training developed to attract businesses with well compensated jobs, how recreational interests are developed and the environment protected, and how public services and facilities will be provided and improved.

The County will use the Comprehensive Plan in the following ways:

- **Goals, Objectives, and Strategies**

The Comprehensive Plan provides objectives and strategies that guide short term actions to reach long term goals. These strategies, which are reflections of County values identified through public outreach efforts, will be used as guidelines in the analysis of managing growth and other capital investment decisions.

- **Future Land Use Map**

The Future Land Use Map shall be referenced in making managed growth and capital investment decisions. It provides a representation of the County's vision helping to guide development based on citizen input, development needs and preferences and indicates areas where various types of land uses should be encouraged to grow.

- **Implementation Plan**

The Comprehensive Plan includes an Implementation Plan that will direct public investment and private initiative: Plan implementation is carried out through the adoption or revision of ordinances and through the completion of projects and programs outlined in the goals, objectives and strategies sections.

A call to action

This is a dynamic time for Oconee County. Rapidly changing technology, national demographic shifts, and changing market preferences are reshaping our county. Many of the changes Oconee County has experienced over the last decade present daunting challenges. But at the same time, the County has had successes addressing needs and cultivating its unique assets. The Plan's recommended actions include more visionary efforts to address our challenges and build upon our assets.

Challenges to Overcome:

- Stagnant workforce population growth
- Transportation Infrastructure planning for cars, bikes, and pedestrian
- Careers, not just jobs, but the need for more high paying ones.
- Lack of emphasis on training for skilled "blue-collar jobs"
- Critical shortage of affordable & obtainable housing
- Critical shortage of housing and planning for housing and care for our aging population
- Limited internet availability
- Divided population regarding managing growth
- Lack of entertainment options

Assets to Build On:

- Being a *Growth Region*
- I-85 corridor
- Clemson University and Tri- County Technical College
- Retirement communities
- Our agricultural areas
- Mountain, lakes, and rivers
- Strong light-industry base
- Geographic placement and mild climate
- Quality tourist-areas
- Quality K-12 education
- Recreational activities - biking, hiking, boating

How to measure progress

The many strategies in the Comprehensive Plan vary widely in their very natures. Some are relatively easy to measure; while others are more complex and subjective, reflecting such words as “encourage”, “leverage” or “promote.” Consequently, there is no single uniform system of measuring the success of all these strategies. As progress of a strategy is identified, regular updates will be made to the County Council. Once experience is gained completing a strategy, the lessons learned will be adapted to the remaining similar strategies.

How can citizens become involved?

The foundation of the Comprehensive Plan rests on input from the County’s citizens. Once the plan has been accepted by the County Council, the Planning Commission will begin addressing the goals, objectives and strategies that fall within their purview. Other boards, committees and commissions, along with the County Council will address other identified priorities. Continued input from citizens and nongovernmental organizations will be critical to success. This can be accomplished by attending and speaking at meetings of the Planning Commission or County Council. Additionally, making written comments to these groups, meeting with Commission members, or any combination of these means is encouraged. Meeting dates and times of these groups can be found on the county’s web site: oconeesc.com

Who we heard from

The Comprehensive Plan is revised based on citizen input. To encourage citizens to attend upcoming meetings, newspaper advertisements and radio announcements were used. Nine public outreach meetings were held in all five voting districts. Approximately 500 citizens attended these meetings and we received over 250 comments. Additionally, five newspaper inserts went out with surveys to 10,000 addresses, of which 1187 surveys were returned with an additional 350+survey comments. There were 14 initial focus-group meetings held with stakeholders representing industry, business, environmental, social and community groups. Additional input meetings were held with 15 interested stakeholder groups. Multiple emails were received from individuals and groups. Lastly, there were 20 planning commission meetings dedicated in whole or in-part to the Comprehensive Plan process.

What we heard

The topics listed below are some of what we heard from the citizens and citizen groups during the planning process. The comments that received the most attention are listed and grouped under the general topic. These were identified based on citizen input and are not intended to be in a ranked order.

- **Transportation:**
 - Build a road system for the future
 - Improve maintenance of existing road system
 - Bicycle & pedestrian infrastructure incorporated and expanded into our transportation system
 - Rural transportation options including expansion of CAT bus service
- **Jobs:**
 - Rewarding sustainable careers and jobs
 - Workforce development efforts on “skills for the future”
 - Technical or “Blue-Collar” job training is every bit as important as “White-Collar” job training
- **Housing:**
 - Affordable and obtainable
 - Aging in place with a proximity to services
 - Reduce housing and property blight
- **Law Enforcement:**
 - Increased law enforcement presence
 - Substations in rural areas
 - Increased monitoring and enforcement of safe-driving laws
- **Natural Resources**
 - Protect lakes, mountains and natural beauty
 - Protect drinking water supply
 - Ordered growth and buffers around these areas
 - Preserve rural view

- **Plan for Future**
 - Increase availability of high-speed internet access countywide
 - Managing growth and protection for ag, commercial, community and residential development
 - Sewer expansion
 - Keep youth in the area
 - **Tourism**
 - Promote
 - Expand/maintain parks and recreational sites
 - Promote shopping and sit-down restaurants.
 - Review fee structure for sites and how those fees are distributed throughout the County and municipalities
 - **Quality Development**
 - Encourage citizen participation in process
 - Manage sprawl
 - Develop design standards and incentive to encourage
 - Major Corridor standards for safety and aesthetics
 - Facilitate municipality development
-

What we heard. (continued)

Each element is addressed listing objectives or strategies most commonly mentioned by citizens or citizen groups during the creation of the Plan. These were identified based on citizen input and are not intended to be in a ranked order. The numbers represent an objective or strategy found in that element. The text following the number is a brief summary of the related objective or strategy.

The Comprehensive Plan is comprised of an Executive Summary, 10 Elements, or chapters, and an appendix of community input. These 10 Elements are:

1. Executive Summary
2. Population
3. Housing
4. Transportation
5. Community Facilities
6. Cultural Resources
7. Economic
8. Natural Resources
9. Priority Investment
10. Agricultural
11. Land Use

The numbering system is *Element.Goal.Objective.Strategy* For example; 2.2.2.2 is Population Element, Goal two, objective two, strategy two

Population

- a) 2.1.2.4/2.2.2 – Coordinate and develop programs with available agencies for quality education to include advanced training.
- b) 2.1.2/2.1.2.3/7.3.1.4 – Seek opportunities for entertainment and recreation options for young adults and families.
- c) 2.2.1 – Ensure access to adequate health care and preventative services.
- d) 2.3.1 – Coordinate planning efforts among the county, municipalities and neighboring jurisdictions.

Housing

- a) 3.1.2/3.1.2.2 – Encourage housing development that will allow residents to “age-in-place” such as higher density and multi-family, assisted living and nursing facilities.
- b) 3.2.1.2/3.2.1.3 – Develop housing options that are affordable for low- and middle-income families.
- c) 3.2.2.1 – Expand water and sewer facilities for new residential development.
- d) 3.1.1.1 – Development of a range of housing types to include single-family, multi-family developments and manufactured homes.

Economic development

- a) 4.3.1.1/4.3.1 – Promote the development of downtown retail and commercial markets.
- b) 4.3.2.4 – Improve high speed internet access to all areas of the County.
- c) 4.1.1.3 – Continue to develop the I-85 industrial corridor.
- d) 4.3.2.1 – Support small business start-up and expansion and assist in clearing key steps in the development process.

Cultural resources

- a) 5.1.1/5.1 – Emphasize the importance of the historic and cultural resources of the County thru plans and ordinances.
- b) 5.3.1.1/5.3.2.3 – Develop and promote tourism and recreation.
- c) 5.2.2.4 – Encourage volunteer involvement in cultural programming and civic groups.
- d) 5.1.2.4 – Explore the reuse of the Utica Mill site.

Natural resources

- a) 6.2.4.4 – Promote programs to discourage littering; encourage litter pickup programs; review ordinances for littering.
- b) 6.2/6.2.1/6.2.3 – Preserve, protect and enhance County’s land resources.
- c) 6.2.3.1/6.2.3/6.2.4.3 – Protect natural resources for recreational uses and develop opportunities for recreational access.
- d) 6.3.3.1/6.3.4.2 – Adopt measures for erosion and sediment control and preserve watersheds around lakes.

Community facilities

- a) 7.2.1.3 – Expand and upgrade library facilities.
- b) 7.3.1.4 – Explore ways to increase recreational opportunities for residents of all ages.
- c) 7.3.1.3 – Evaluate, amend, and implement recreation plans as necessary.
- d) 7.3.1.1 – Develop a Countywide greenway system and to connect existing parks to enable safe cycling routes.

Agriculture

- a) 8.1.2.7 – Promote farm stands and farmers markets in rural and urban areas.
- b) 8.1.1.2 – Support collaboration between landowners and public in the development of plans for preservation of farmland and forests.
- c) 8.1.1.5 – Support state legislation that links incentives to continue farming with controls preventing conversion of agricultural land to non-farm uses.
- d) 8.3/8.3.1 – Ensure access to healthy, fresh food.

Transportation

- a) 9.2.1.2/9.2.1.1 – Develop ongoing systematic road maintenance and upgrade program based on steady revenue sources.
- b) 9.3.2/9.3.2.1/9.3.2.2 – Provide and maintain safe and accessible trails, sidewalks and bicycle lanes in appropriate areas.
- c) 9.2.1.7 – Establish coordination and communication between local and state transportation departments.
- d) 9.2.1.4 - Limit curb cuts in high traffic areas.

Priority investment

- a) 10.1.1 – Plan for and prioritize public infrastructure and facility's needs.
- b) 10.1.2.1 – Encourage development that protects and preserves our natural resources.
- c) 10.1.2.9 – Expand bicycle and pedestrian routes to allow for recreational and greater use of alternative forms of transportation.
- d) 10.1.2.3 – Enhance access to affordable housing through both public and private cooperation.

Land use

- a) 11.1.2.2. Coordinate urban/suburban development.
- b) 11.1.2.5. Use corridor overlays, design guidelines, and performance standards while respecting private property rights.
- c) 11.1.5.2. Work with developers and other public and private agencies and organizations to enable the revitalization of dilapidated and unsafe housing in declining residential areas.
- d) 11.1.4.3. Promote development consistent with the scenic character of S.C. Hwy. 11.

How to implement the Plan

Comprehensive Plan priorities should be an agenda item at the annual County Council strategic planning session. The County Administrator will present a priority list of Plan strategies, funding needed, progress goal timelines and estimated completion dates to County Council. These annual items for funding and completion will be taken directly from the Comprehensive Plan. Funding (and lead time for funding) is a critical component for priorities and will communicate to the citizens of the County that their priorities are being addressed each year, both objectively and financially.

Acceptance of priorities by County Council should be publicized to demonstrate the County's effort to address the citizens input to the Comprehensive Plan.

The County, along with other agencies, is listed in the Comprehensive Plan as an "Accountable Agencies". For the strategy to be effectively completed, all the listed agencies must devote the resources and cooperation to complete the strategy. It is the responsibility of the County staff (Administrator and department heads) to identify the individuals in these organizations who are accountable for "partnering" to accomplish the strategy.

The County Administrator should assign action items to department heads for coordination with the responsible individual in the "Accountable Agencies". The department heads should report at regular intervals on the expense status, timeline status of key goals and if help is needed with outside agencies.

The County Administrator should report progress to County Council on a regular basis as a part of the performance review process.

Consequences of inaction

- Loss of trust in government to respond to residents
- Missed opportunity to keep residents involved in long term planning
- Disillusionment by public after such a major public effort to revise the comprehensive plan
- Continued unmanaged sprawl with business/population growth
- Cost to correct problem increases with delay
- Perception that another study will 'go on the shelf'
- Short term actions causing long term problems

Chapter 2. Population Element

Population growth directly impacts the physical growth of a community. Increases in population are accompanied by increased demand for housing, education, health care, human services, water and sewer, recreation, and other key community services. In turn, the characteristics of the population can shape the scope and delivery of these essential community services and infrastructure.

The Population Element serves as the foundation for the other elements of the Oconee County Comprehensive Plan, providing a detailed assessment of Census data combined with other key social indicators. The Element provides an overview and analysis of key demographic aspects of the County including: historic growth trends and population projections for the County and its municipalities; the income and family status characteristics of Oconee County households; the educational levels of County residents; the race, gender, and age characteristics of the County's population; and related factors that impact future growth. The Population Element provides the context for understanding the existing and future needs of the County and its municipalities with respect to housing, employment and job growth, education and community services, infrastructure, and future land development.

A. OCONEE COUNTY AND MUNICIPALITIES

Five municipalities are located within the County. The City of Seneca is the County's largest municipality, both in land area at 7.55 square miles and in population, with 8,228 residents in 2016 (Table 2-1). The City of Walhalla is the County seat and is the second largest municipality in the County at 3.96 square miles and 4,263 residents, followed closely by the City of Westminster at 3.41 square miles and 2,482 residents. The Towns of Salem and West Union are both less than one square mile in size, with populations of 305 and 149 residents, respectively. Map 2-1 illustrates the location and size of the County's municipalities.

Table 2-1. Size and Density of Oconee County and Municipalities, 2016

Jurisdiction	Total Land Area (square miles)*	2016 ACS	Persons per Square Mile
Oconee County	626.33	75,375	120.3
Salem	0.83	149	179.5
Seneca	7.55	8,228	1,089.8
Walhalla (County seat)	3.96	4,263	1,076.5
Westminster	3.41	2,482	727.9
West Union	0.77	305	396.1

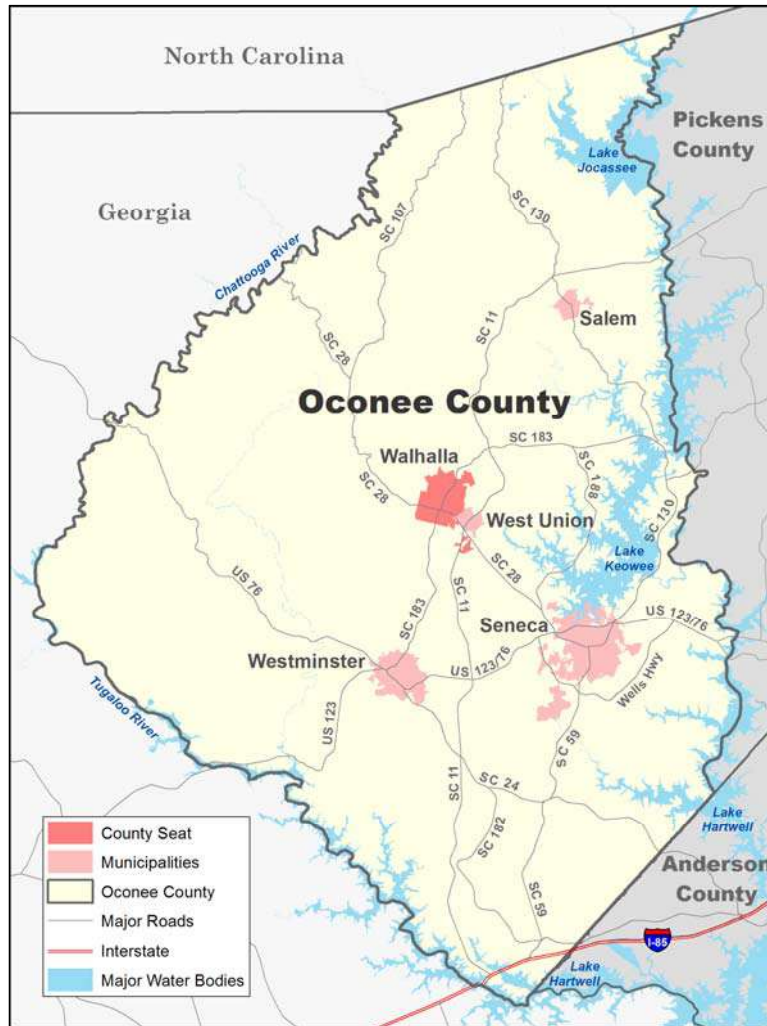
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey (ACS); 2010 Census

Oconee County is part of the six-county Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG) region that also includes Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Pickens, and Spartanburg counties. ACOG is a voluntary organization of local governments governed by a 44-member Board of Directors that includes local elected officials, citizen, and minority members. Authorized in 1971 as one of the



ten councils of government in South Carolina, the ACOG provides a number of services and assistance to local governments in the region including public administration, planning, information systems and technology, grants, workforce development, and services for the elderly population.

Map 2-1. Oconee County and Municipalities



B. DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

The U.S. Census Bureau is required by Federal law to conduct a census every ten years to determine the number of people in the United States. The count, commonly known as the decennial Census, is conducted every decade on April 1 in years ending in zero. The *American Community Survey* (ACS) is a yearly survey conducted nationwide by the U.S. Census Bureau that collects a wide range of demographic, social, economic, and housing data. The data is compiled into three-year and five-year estimates, with the five year compilation considered to be the most accurate depiction of the data. While the main function of the decennial Census is to provide



population counts for Congressional apportionment, the primary purpose of the ACS is to measure the changing social and economic characteristics of the U.S. population.

Oconee County ranks as South Carolina's 18th largest county in population with an estimated 2016 population of 75,375 residents (2012-2016 ACS). Table 2-2 provides comparative data on population growth in the County, the Appalachian Council of Governments Region, and the State by decade since 1970. Oconee County population gains have narrowed with each passing decade, with growth rates ranging from a high of 19.4% from 1970 to 1980 to only 12.2% from 2000 to 2010. However, the County's growth rate in the most recent decade ranked 16th highest among the State's 46 counties. The countywide growth rate during the 40-year period from 1970 to 2010 was higher than that of both the Region and the State at 82.4%. Figure 2-1 illustrates population trends for the County, Region, and State from 1970 to 2010.

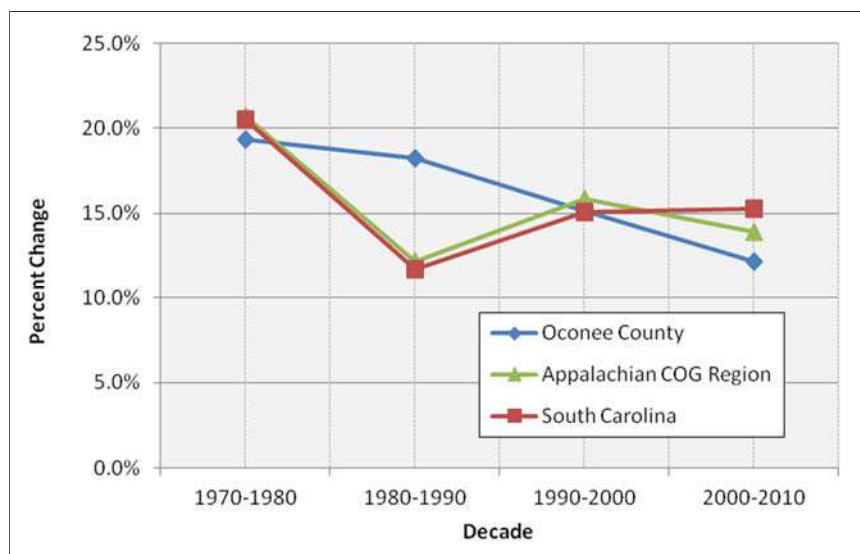
Table 2-2. Population Change by Decade, 1970 to 2010

Year	Oconee County		Appalachian COG Region		South Carolina	
	Total	% Change*	Total	% Change*	Total	% Change*
1970	40,728	--	656,219	--	2,590,516	--
1980	48,611	19.4%	791,895	20.7%	3,121,820	20.5%
1990	57,494	18.3%	888,057	12.1%	3,486,703	11.7%
2000	66,215	15.2%	1,028,656	15.8%	4,012,012	15.1%
2010	74,273	12.2%	1,171,497	13.9%	4,625,364	15.3%
Change 1970-2010	33,545	82.4%	515,278	78.5%	2,034,848	78.5%

* Percentage change from previous time period

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1970 through 2010;
S.C. Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office, S.C. Statistical Abstract, 2018

Figure 2-1. Population Change by Decade, 1970 to 2010



Oconee County grew by 1,102 residents from 2010 to 2016, with a growth rate of 1.5% over the same period (Table 2-3). The County seat of Walhalla had the largest population gain from 2000 to 2010 among Oconee County municipalities, with an increase of 462 people and a growth rate of 12.2%. Similarly, the City of Seneca added 450 people during the same period for a growth rate of 5.9%. The Town of Salem experienced moderate growth of only nine people (7.1%). However, Census data indicates population declines in the City of Westminster of 325 people (or 11.8%) and the Town of West Union of six people (or 2%) during the decade. 2012-2016 ACS data reveals moderate population changes since 2010 in all of the County's municipalities, ranging from an increase of 126 people in Seneca and 64 in Westminster to only 24 residents in Salem and West Union. Walhalla experienced no increase over the previous six-years.

Table 2-3. Population Change in Oconee County and Municipalities, 2010 to 2016

Jurisdiction	2000 Census	2010 Census	# Change 2000-2010	% Change 2000-2010	2016 ACS	# Change 2010-2016	% Change 2010-2016
Oconee County	66,215	74,273	8,058	12.2%	75,375	1,102	1.5%
Salem	126	135	9	7.1%	149	14	10.4%
Seneca	7,652	8,102	450	5.9%	8,228	126	1.6%
Walhalla	3,801	4,263	462	12.2%	4,263	0	0.0%
Westminster	2,743	2,418	-325	-11.8%	2,482	64	2.6%
West Union	297	291	-6	-2.0%	305	14	4.8%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census and 2012-2016 ACS

As illustrated in Table 2-4, migration has been the primary source of population change in Oconee County since 1990. Net migration increased slightly from 2000 to 2010 over the previous decade, but migration in recent years slowed to an annual average of 426. However, net migration increased to 743 from 2015 to 2016 – a trend that if continued may result in a higher net migration for the decade (Table 2-4).

Total population change is also impacted significantly by the rate of natural increase provided through births and deaths. While births exceeded deaths in Oconee County in the two decades since 1990, that trend reversed since 2010 with deaths outpacing births (Table 2-4). This trend is projected to continue through the end of the decade.

Table 2-4. Components of Population Change in Oconee County

Estimate Timeframes	Total Population Change	Natural Increase			Net Migration	
		Total	Births	Deaths	Total	Average Per Year
1990 to 2000	8,721	1,913	7,629	5,716	6,808	680.8
2000 to 2010	8,058	1,077	8,114	7,037	6,981	698.1
2010 to 2016	2,080	-412	4,916	5,328	2,557	426.2
Annual Est. 2015-2016	611*	-122	782	904	743	---

* Includes a residual that cannot be attributed to any specific demographic component

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS; S.C. Statistical Abstract, 2018



Patterns of population change are illustrated by an analysis of growth by Census tract. Three tracts were added to the County for the 2010 Census, with 2000 Census tracts 304 (304.01 and 304.02), 306 (306.01 and 306.02), and 309 (309.01 and 309.02) each split into two tracts (Map 2-2). Several Oconee County tracts encompass sizable, primarily rural areas, whereas tracts in the Seneca and Walhalla areas are comparatively smaller and more densely populated.

The largest increase in population between 2000 and 2010 occurred in Census tract 306 (2010 tracts 306.01 and 306.02), with a gain of 1,802 persons at a rate of 25.4% (Map 2-4 and Table 2-5). This tract includes the northern area of Seneca and a portion of Lake Keowee. However, the highest rate of increase was 30.7% (1,430 persons) in tract 307.02, located to the southeast of Seneca and bordered by Lake Hartwell and Anderson and Pickens Counties. The population of tract 303, located to the east of Walhalla and including a large portion of Lake Keowee, increased by 22.8% (1,140 persons). Tract 309 (2010 tracts 209.01 and 209.02), encompassing the southernmost area of the County and bordering Lake Hartwell, grew by 1,378 persons (16%).

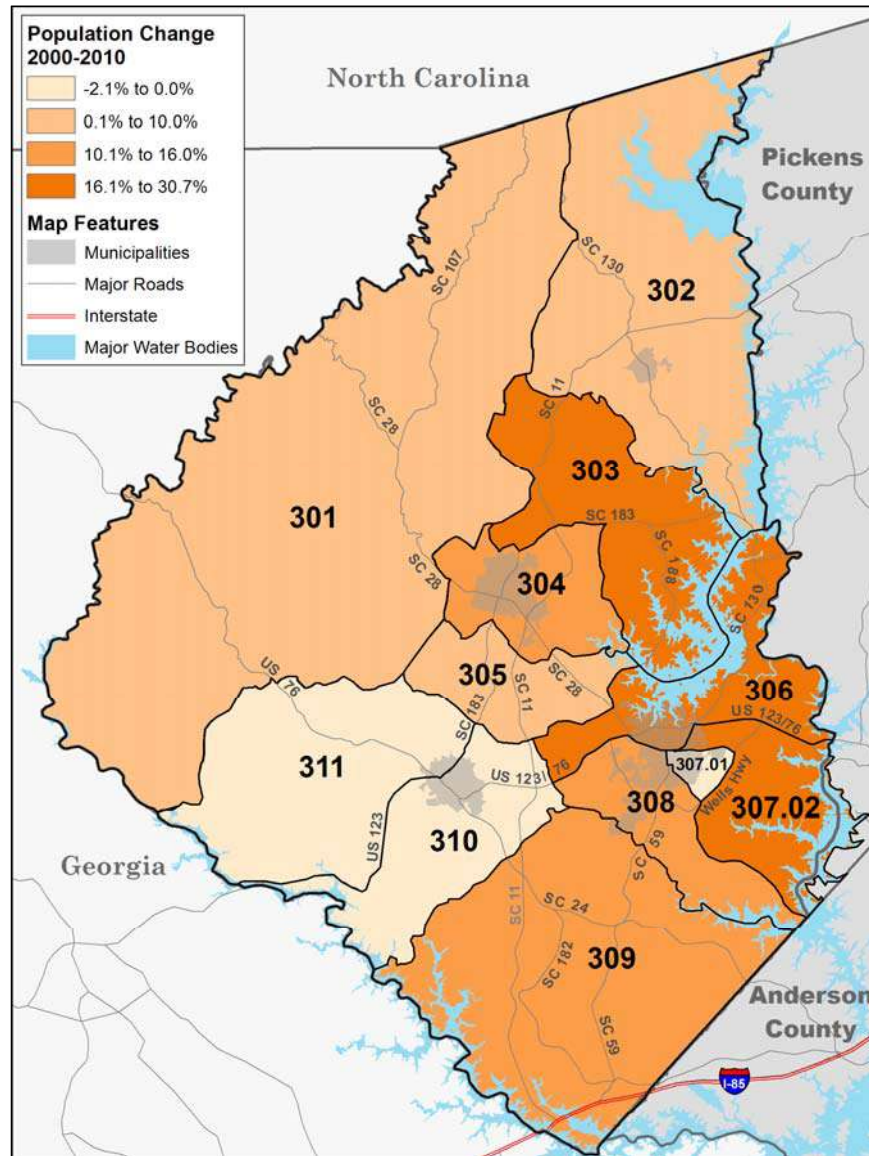
Three tracts experienced small population losses between 2000 and 2010, including rural tracts 310 and 311 at 87 (1.6%) and 81 (2.1%) persons, respectively, and tract 307.01 that includes the southeastern area of Seneca at a loss of 65 persons (1.7%).

Table 2-5. Population Change by Census Tract, 2000, 2010 and 2016

2000 Census Tracts	2000 Census Population	2010 Census Tracts	2010 Census Population	2016 ACS Population	% Change 2000-2010	% Change 2010-2016
301	4,046	301	4,352	4,473	7.6%	2.8%
302	5,498	302	5,764	5,529	4.8%	-4.1%
303	5,005	303	6,145	6,825	22.8%	11.1%
304	7,892	304.01	6,989	6,985	11.1%	-0.1%
		304.02	1,779	1,873		5.3%
305	4,101	305	4,375	4,412	6.7%	0.8%
306	7,088	306.01	4,443	4,899	25.4%	10.3%
		306.02	4,447	4,640		4.3%
307.01	3,798	307.01	3,733	3,900	-1.7%	4.5%
307.02	4,656	307.02	6,086	6,520	30.7%	7.1%
308	6,395	308	7,214	6,744	12.8%	-6.5%
309	8,602	309.01	2,454	2,540	16.0%	3.5%
		309.02	7,526	7,372		-2.0%
310	5,354	310	5,267	4,821	-1.6%	-8.5%
311	3,780	311	3,699	3,842	-2.1%	3.9%
Total	66,215	---	74,273	75,375	12.2%	1.5%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010; 2012-2016 ACS

Map 2-2. Population Change by Census Tract 2000 to 2010*



*Based on 2000 Census Tract Boundaries
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010

C. DEMOGRAPHIC OUTLOOK

Oconee County posted an 18.3% growth rate between 1990 and 2000. The County’s rate of population growth slowed to 15.2% from 2000 to 2010. The rate of increase continued to slow from 2010 to 2016 with a six-year growth rate of only 1.5% (1,102 residents).

The potential for future population growth may be fueled by continued single-family residential development in areas along the U.S. Highway 76/123 corridor between Seneca and Pickens County, in the areas surrounding the County’s larger municipalities, in the areas near Interstate



85 that offer an easy commute to the Greenville Metro area, and in remaining undeveloped infill areas bordering Lake Keowee. Potential multi-family development may also occur in the areas between Seneca and Pickens County. However, many other factors can influence future population changes including interest rates, local tax rates, the economy, the housing market, fuel prices, and an aging population.

South Carolina is projected to gain 400,000 new residents between 2010 and 2020 (*UNC Carolina Population Center, 2015*). The percentage of the aging population with the financial resources to relocate will increase as more of the “baby boomer” generation enters retirement. *Kiplinger* ranked South Carolina twelfth highest among the “Best States to Retire” in 2018, noting the State’s mild weather, below-average living costs, tax exemptions on social security and other retirement income, and low property taxes as influential factors. Given the frequency and severity of natural disasters such as hurricanes affecting popular retirement destinations along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts – coupled with rising property taxes, housing costs, and sharp increases in coastal insurance premiums – many retirees are seeking less expensive, less vulnerable communities further inland that offer many of the same amenities.

The ten-county Upstate Region is widely considered an attractive retiree destination within the State. Oconee County offers convenient regional access through the interstate and intrastate road systems; close proximity to Clemson university; abundant natural resources that include Lakes Jocassee, Hartwell, and Keowee; and a myriad of outdoor recreation opportunities including whitewater rafting, fishing, paddling, horseback riding, camping, and hiking. For many of the same reasons, families and individuals looking for a more rural residential setting, opportunities for an active lifestyle, or alternatives to more densely developed areas find Oconee County to be an attractive option. *SmartAsset*, a financial technology company that provides personal finance advice and decision tools, ranked the City of Seneca among the top 10 places to retire in South Carolina and the 15th best place to retire in the Nation in 2015. The list is based on tax friendliness, medical care, and social life.

The Environics Analytics Company, a leading global data and analytics company, provides annual estimates and five-year projections of population and other demographic data. The Company’s *Claritas Pop-Facts* data uses proprietary methodologies, combined with Census and American Community Survey data, to estimate current population and provide five-year projections for a range of geographies including counties and municipalities. The current edition provides 2018 estimates and 2023 projections for current-year geographies including counties and municipalities. County population projections through 2030 can be made using annual growth trends based on these five-year growth projections.

Claritas Pop-Facts estimates indicate that the population of Oconee County will reach 80,260 by 2023, with a projected increase of 10% to 84,739 residents by 2030 (Table 2-6). Growth is also projected in four of the County’s five municipalities over the 12-year period. The cities of Seneca and Walhalla are projected to grow by 8.2% (691 persons) and 6.5% (286 persons), respectively. Although the Town of West Union is projected to grow by only 26 persons, the rate of growth is



similar to Seneca at 8%. Modest growth of less than one percent is anticipated for the City of Westminster and no change is expected for the population of the Town of Salem in the coming decade

Table 2-6. Population Estimates and Projections

Jurisdiction	2010 ¹ Census	2018 ² EA Estimate	2023 ² EA Projection	2030 Projection	Projected Change 2018 - 2030	
					#	%
Oconee County	74,273	77,061	80,260	84,739	7,678	10.0%
Salem	135	121	121	121	0	0.0%
Seneca	8,102	8,418	8,706	9,109	691	8.2%
Walhalla	4,263	4,423	4,542	4,709	286	6.5%
Westminster	2,418	2,472	2,478	2,486	14	0.6%
West Union	291	329	340	355	26	8.0%

Sources: ¹U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census; ²EnviroNics Analytics (EA) Claritas Pop-Facts, 2018

The future growth rate is also dependent on many factors including household and family size, availability of new housing, in and out-migration, economic activity, and the availability of a range of appropriate housing options. For municipalities, future annexations may also play a role in population growth.

D. URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION

Urban areas are defined by the Census as “densely settled territory” that can “consist of: 1) a cluster of one or more block groups or Census block groups or Census blocks each of which has a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile at the time; and 2) surrounding block groups and Census blocks each of which has a population density of at least 500 people per square mile at the time; and 3) less densely settled blocks that form enclaves or indentations, or are used to connect discontinuous areas with qualifying densities.”

Rural areas are defined as all territory located outside of urban areas. In 2010, the County ranked 20th statewide in the percentage of rural population, with 64.9% of its residents living in rural areas (2010 Census). However, the County is becoming urbanized at a faster pace than urbanization statewide. The County’s urban population grew by 31.6% from 1990 to 2000 and by 35.6% from 2000 to 2010 (Table 2-7). By comparison, the State’s urban population increased by 27.4% in the 1990s and 26.4% from 2000 to 2010.



Table 2-7. Urban and Rural Population in the County and State, 1990, 2000, and 2010

	1990		2000		2010		% change 1990-2000	% change 2000-2010
	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Oconee County	57,494	100.0%	66,215	100.0%	74,273	100.0%	15.2%	12.2%
Urban	14,601	25.4%	19,215	29.0%	26,054	35.1%	31.6%	35.6%
Rural	42,893	74.6%	47,000	71.0%	48,219	64.9%	9.6%	2.6%
South Carolina	3,486,703	100.0%	4,012,012	100.0%	4,625,364	100.0%	15.1%	15.3%
Urban	1,905,378	54.6%	2,427,124	60.5%	3,067,809	66.3%	27.4%	26.4%
Rural	1,581,325	45.4%	1,584,888	39.5%	1,557,555	33.7%	0.2%	-1.7%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010; 2000-2001 S.C. Statistical Abstract

Oconee County's urbanized areas include the cities of Seneca and Walhalla and the surrounding unincorporated areas, including areas along the south shore of Lake Keowee and its southern border with Pickens County. The County's five predominantly urban tracts include the greater Seneca and Walhalla areas, ranging from 100% urban in tract 307.01 that includes a southeastern portion of Seneca to 64.1% in tract 304.01 that includes most of Walhalla. The County's six rural Census tracts are in the northern, western, and southernmost portions of the County. Table 2-8 and Map 2-3 detail urban and rural population data by Census tract.

Table 2-8. Urban and Rural Population by Oconee County Census Tracts, 2010

Census Tract	Total Population	Urban		Rural	
		#	%	#	%
301	4,352	0	0.0%	4,352	100.0%
302	5,764	0	0.0%	5,764	100.0%
303	6,145	250	4.1%	5,895	95.9%
304.01	6,989	4,477	64.1%	2,512	35.9%
304.02	1,779	177	9.9%	1,602	90.1%
305	4,375	1,375	31.4%	3,000	68.6%
306.01	4,443	3,516	79.1%	927	20.9%
306.02	4,447	3,663	82.4%	784	17.6%
307.01	3,733	3,733	100.0%	0	0.0%
307.02	6,086	4,608	75.7%	1,478	24.3%
308	7,214	4,255	59.0%	2,959	41.0%
309.01	2,454	0	0.0%	2,454	100.0%
309.02	7,526	0	0.0%	7,526	100.0%
310	5,267	0	0.0%	5,267	100.0%
311	3,699	0	0.0%	3,699	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010



increased life expectancy, has contributed to an aging population nationwide. The median age of Oconee County residents increased by 5.4 years from 2000 to 2016, outpacing the statewide age increase of only 3.4 years (Table 2-9). Oconee also posted the highest median age of any Appalachian COG Region county in the 2000 and 2010 Census. The County median jumped by 3.9 years from 2000 to 2010, rising to a high of 44.9 years by 2016.

**Table 2-9. Median Age in Years by Decade for the Appalachian COG Region and State
2000, 2010 and 2016**

Jurisdiction	2000	2010	2016
Anderson County	37.3	39.7	40.5
Cherokee County	35.3	38.3	39.1
Greenville County	35.5	37.2	37.9
Oconee County	39.5	43.4	44.9
Pickens County	32.7	34.9	35.8
Spartanburg County	36.1	38.0	38.2
South Carolina	35.4	37.9	38.8

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, and 2010 Census; 2012-2016 ACS

As detailed in Table 2-10, more than one-fifth (21.5%) of County residents are aged 65 or older – higher than the 15.8% of individuals in this age group statewide. The percentage of younger baby boomers aged 45-to-64 years old residing in the County at 28.3% is also slightly higher than that of South Carolina at 26.6%. This group represents the largest age segment of the County population. Residents aged 25-to-44 comprise the second highest percentage for the County at 21.7%. The percentages of Oconee residents in younger age groups are slightly below the statewide percentages for groups 18 years and younger.

Table 2-10. Population by Age Group for the County and State, 2016

Age Group	Oconee County		South Carolina	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	75,375	100.0%	4,834,605	100.0%
Under 5 years	4,016	5.3%	291,499	6.0%
5-17 years	11,340	15.0%	794,280	16.4%
18-24 years	6,054	8.0%	479,402	9.9%
25 - 44 years	16,378	21.7%	1,223,300	25.3%
45 - 64 years	21,346	28.3%	1,284,444	26.6%
65 - 84 years	14,803	19.6%	680,832	14.1%
85+ years	1,438	1.9%	80,848	1.7%
Under 18 years	15,356	20.4%	1,085,779	22.5%
18+ years	60,019	79.6%	3,748,826	77.5%
65+ years	16,241	21.5%	761,680	15.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

The age distribution of Seneca and Westminster residents are similar to that of the County. In contrast, the age of Walhalla and West Union residents is younger, while that of Salem residents



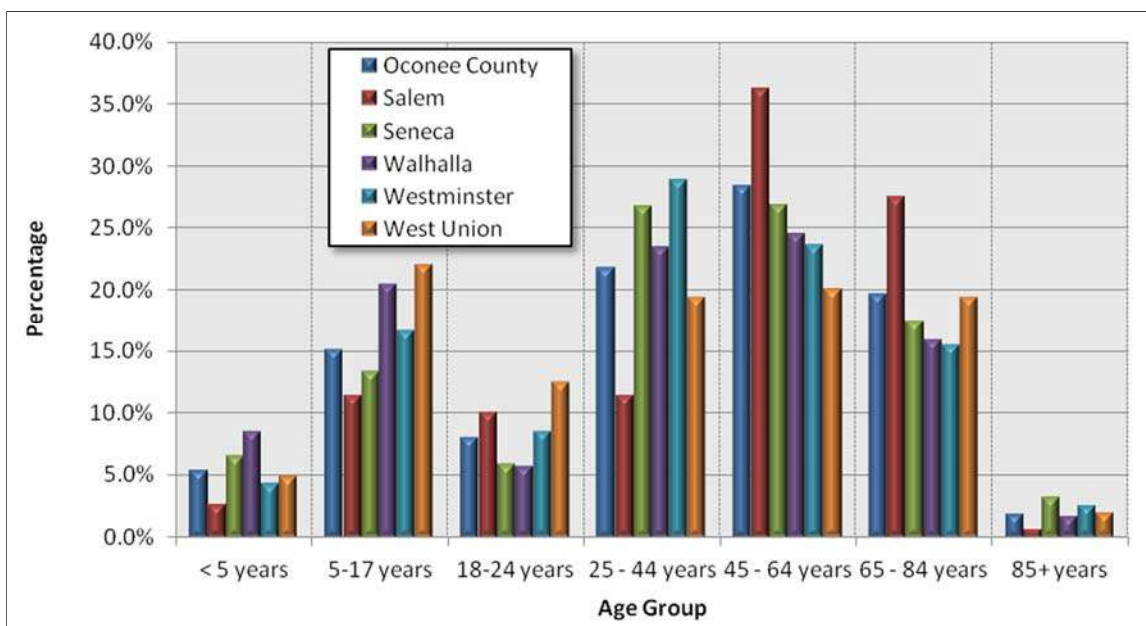
is older (Table 2-11). Nearly 29% of Walhalla residents and 27% of West Union residents are children under the age of 18 years. Well over a quarter (28.2%) of Salem residents are aged 65 or older. Figure 2-2 compares the age distribution of County and municipal residents.

Table 2-11. Population by Age Group for County Municipalities, 2016

Age Group	Salem		Seneca		Walhalla		Westminster		West Union	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total	149	100.0%	8,228	100.0%	4,263	100.0%	2,482	100.0%	305	100.0%
< 5 years	4	2.7%	543	6.6%	362	8.5%	107	4.3%	15	4.9%
5-17 years	17	11.4%	1,095	13.3%	869	20.4%	414	16.7%	67	22.0%
18-24 years	15	10.1%	486	5.9%	241	5.7%	210	8.5%	38	12.5%
25 - 44 years	17	11.4%	2,199	26.7%	999	23.4%	715	28.8%	59	19.3%
45 - 64 years	54	36.2%	2,206	26.8%	1,043	24.5%	586	23.6%	61	20.0%
65 - 84 years	41	27.5%	1,429	17.4%	676	15.9%	385	15.5%	59	19.3%
85+ years	1	0.7%	270	3.3%	73	1.7%	65	2.6%	6	2.0%
< 18 years	21	14.1%	1,638	19.9%	1,231	28.9%	521	21.0%	82	26.9%
18+ years	128	85.9%	6,590	80.1%	3,032	71.1%	1,961	79.0%	223	73.1%
65+ years	42	28.2%	1,699	20.6%	749	17.6%	450	18.1%	65	21.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

**Figure 2-2. Comparative Age Distribution by Percentage, 2016
Oconee County and Municipalities**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

Map 2-4 illustrates age distribution by Census tract for Oconee County. The tract with the youngest population is 307.02 with a median age of only 30 years. This tract is bordered by Lake



The percentage of female residents in Oconee County mirrors the Nation at 50.8%, but is slightly lower than in the State at 51.4% (Table 2-12). The gender balance decreases dramatically within the 85 and over age group in which nearly two-thirds (63%) are female. Younger mortality rates and war casualties among older men are the leading causes of the disparity between males (46.8%) and females (53.2%) among residents in the age 65 and older category. While males slightly outnumber females in children aged 5 to 17 and young adults aged 18 to 44, females outnumber males by a small percentage in all other groups. Women comprise nearly two-thirds (63%) of residents aged 85 and older.

Table 2-12. Age and Gender, 2016

Age Groups	Total Persons	Male		Female	
		#	%	#	%
Total Population	75,375	37,104	49.2%	38,271	50.8%
Under 5 years	4,016	2,005	49.9%	2,011	50.1%
5 to 17 years	11,340	5,710	50.4%	5,630	49.6%
18 to 44 years	22,432	11,479	51.2%	10,953	48.8%
45 to 64 years	21,346	10,317	48.3%	11,029	51.7%
65 to 84 years	14,803	7,061	47.7%	7,742	52.3%
85+ years	1,438	532	37.0%	906	63.0%
Total under 18 years	15,356	7,715	50.2%	7,641	49.8%
Total 18+ years	60,019	29,389	49.0%	30,630	51.0%
Total 65+ years	16,241	7,593	46.8%	8,648	53.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

The age and gender composition of residents can be a significant factor in local planning. An aging population requires a host of special services such as health care, specialized housing and transportation. Estimates of median age by gender reveal that both males and females in Oconee County are notably older than their counterparts throughout the State and Nation (Table 2-13).

Table 2-13. Median Age by Gender, 2016

Gender	Oconee County	South Carolina	United States
All Persons	44.9 years	38.8 years	37.7 years
Male	43.3 years	37.3 years	36.3 years
Female	46.1 years	40.3 years	39.0 years

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

2. Racial and Ethnic Composition

The racial composition of Oconee County is predominantly White at more than 88%, well above the State at 67.3% and Nation at 73.3% (Table 2-14). The County has a lower percentage of African-American residents at 7.4%, as compared to the percentage statewide at 27.4% and nationwide at 12.6%. The percentage of County residents of other races, including persons of two or more races, is similar to that of the State at 4.4%. The same is true for the percentage of



the County population whose ethnicity is Hispanic at 4.9%, which is slightly lower than the statewide percentage of 5.3%. An individual is considered to be of Latino or Hispanic origin if the person is of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American or other Spanish culture of origin, regardless of race. Therefore, residents of Hispanic origin are counted within the racial categories of Caucasian, African-American and Other Races as provided in Table 2-14 and are also shown separately as an ethnic subcategory.

Among the County's municipalities, the City of Seneca has the lowest percentage of White residents at 65.4%, as well as the highest percentage of African-American residents at 26.7%. Salem has the highest percentage of Caucasian residents at 97.3%, followed by Westminster at 89.4% and Walhalla at 81.7%. West Union has the highest percentage of residents of other races at 26.2% (80 persons). Walhalla has the largest Hispanic population at 1,138 persons, comprising more than one-fourth of the City's population. However the Hispanic population of West Union comprises the largest percentage among the five municipalities at 28.2%.

Table 2-14. Racial Composition, Oconee County and Municipalities, 2016

Jurisdiction	Total	White		African-American		Other Races ¹		Hispanic ²	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Oconee County	75,375	66,486	88.2%	5,549	7.4%	3,340	4.4%	3,700	4.9%
Salem	149	145	97.3%	0	0.0%	4	2.7%	0	0.0%
Seneca	8,228	5,384	65.4%	2,198	26.7%	646	7.9%	506	6.1%
Walhalla	4,263	3,483	81.7%	373	8.7%	407	9.5%	1,138	26.7%
Westminster	2,482	2,219	89.4%	219	8.8%	44	1.8%	17	0.7%
West Union	305	218	71.5%	7	2.3%	80	26.2%	86	28.2%
South Carolina	4,834,605	3,252,252	67.3%	1,322,368	27.4%	259,985	5.4%	258,361	5.3%
United States	318,558,162	233,657,078	73.3%	40,241,818	12.6%	44,659,266	14.0%	55,199,107	17.3%

¹Other races also includes persons of two or more races

²Hispanic is an ethnic category in the Census, therefore persons of Hispanic Origin may be of any race

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

Oconee County has experienced racial and ethnic composition changes in recent years. The County's White population increased by 10.4% in the 2000s. During the same decade, the number of African-American residents increased by only 1.1% (63 persons). There were substantial increases among persons of "other races" and persons of "two or more races" at 110.8% (1,213 persons) and 115.6% (630 persons), respectively. Table 2-15 provides racial composition data for Oconee County for 2000, 2010 and 2016.

In Oconee County, 4.9% of the population (3,700 persons) is Hispanic, more than double the 1,562 persons of Hispanic origin (2.4%) in 2000. From 2000 to 2010, the Hispanic residents in the County increased by 114.4%, or 1,787 residents. The County ranks 18th highest statewide in the percentage of Hispanic population and 17th in the number of Hispanic residents (2012-2016 ACS). By comparison, South Carolina's Hispanic population statewide grew by nearly 148% from 2000 to 2010, while increase nationwide was much less at only 43%. Research by the Sisters of Charity Foundation indicates that there are a number of factors that draw Hispanic immigrants to South Carolina including opportunities for employment, low cost of living, a relatively safe



place to live, desire to reunite with family members already in the area, access to quality education and healthcare for their children, and desire to provide for family members in their country of origin (*Latino Immigrant Families in South Carolina, 2013*).

The County's Hispanic community continues to grow, adding 351 persons since 2010, for a growth rate of 10.5% during the 6-year period. This is slightly higher than Hispanic population growth statewide at 9.6% and nationwide at 9.4%. In addition to being predominantly Mexican (71.4%), ACS data reveals that the County's Hispanic population is evenly divided between females and males, with a median age of 25.3 years. More than one-fourth of the County's Hispanic residents (637 persons) speak little-to-no English and nearly one-half (870 persons) lack a high school education. Over 40% of Hispanics in Oconee County (1,485 persons) live in poverty.

Table 2-15. Oconee County Racial Composition, 2000, 2010 and 2016

Race/Ethnicity	2000 Census		2010 Census		2016 ACS		Change 2000-2010	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total	66,215	99.2%	74,273	98.4%	75,375	97.9%	8,058	12.2%
White	59,025	89.1%	65,177	87.8%	66,486	88.2%	6,152	10.4%
African-American	5,550	8.4%	5,613	7.6%	5,549	7.4%	63	1.1%
Other Races	1,095	1.7%	2,308	3.1%	1,781	2.4%	1,213	110.8%
Two or more Races	545	0.8%	1,175	1.6%	1,559	2.1%	630	115.6%
Hispanic*	1,562	2.4%	3,349	4.5%	3,700	4.9%	1,787	114.4%

*Hispanic is an ethnic category in the Census, therefore persons of Hispanic Origin may be of any race

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Census; 2012-2016 ACS

Census tract 307.01 in the southeastern portion of Seneca has the highest percentage of minority (non-White) residents at 35.2%, followed by the adjacent tract 308 with a minority population of 29.7% (Map 2-5). The population of tracts 301 in the western area of the County, 309.02 in the southern area of the County at its border with Anderson County and Georgia, and 302 in the northeastern section of County at the Pickens County border, have the lowest percentages of minority residents at 1.6%, 1.8%, and 2.9%, respectively.

Table 2-16. Place of Birth, 2000 and 2016

Place of Birth	Oconee County				South Carolina			
	2000		2016		2000		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total	66,215	100.0%	75,375	100.0%	4,012,012	100.0%	4,834,605	100.0%
United States Native	64,619	97.6%	72,552	96.3%	3,896,034	97.1%	4,603,889	95.2%
<i>South Carolina</i>	<i>43,456</i>	<i>67.2%</i>	<i>44,484</i>	<i>61.3%</i>	<i>2,568,954</i>	<i>65.9%</i>	<i>2,784,196</i>	<i>60.5%</i>
<i>Different State</i>	<i>20,863</i>	<i>32.3%</i>	<i>27,308</i>	<i>37.6%</i>	<i>1,293,518</i>	<i>33.2%</i>	<i>1,767,132</i>	<i>38.4%</i>
<i>Outside of US*</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>0.5%</i>	<i>760</i>	<i>1.0%</i>	<i>33,562</i>	<i>0.9%</i>	<i>52,561</i>	<i>1.1%</i>
Foreign Born	1,596	2.4%	2,823	3.7%	115,978	2.9%	230,716	4.8%

*Born outside of the United States, but entitled to U.S. citizenship

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2012-2016 ACS

Lack of English proficiency can pose significant language barriers for residents seeking housing, education, employment, medical care, and financial and legal services. However, fewer than 4,000 (5.5%) of the County's population over the age of five speaks a language other than English at home. This is lower than the statewide percentage of 6.9% (Table 2-17). While most people who speak another language at home also speak English, many are not fluent. More than two-thirds (70.4%) of County residents who speak another language at home speak Spanish, and of those Spanish-speakers, less than half (42.5%) speak English less than "very well."

Table 2-17. Language Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English, 2016

Language Spoken and Ability to Speak English	Oconee County		South Carolina	
	#	%	#	%
Total Population 5 Years and Over	71,359	100.0%	4,543,106	100.0%
Speaks English Only at Home	67,460	94.5%	4,230,746	93.1%
Speaks Language other than English at Home	3,899	5.5%	312,360	6.9%
Speaks Spanish	2,743	70.4%	200,761	64.3%
<i>Speaks English Less Than "Very Well"</i>	<i>1,167</i>	<i>42.5%</i>	<i>89,325</i>	<i>44.5%</i>
Speaks Other Indo-European Language	655	16.8%	58,669	18.8%
<i>Speak English Less Than "Very Well"</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>17.3%</i>	<i>14,712</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Other Languages	266	6.8%	41,081	13.2%
<i>Speak English Less Than "Very Well"</i>	<i>163</i>	<i>61.3%</i>	<i>18,453</i>	<i>44.9%</i>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

3. Household and Family Characteristics

Household and family status are key indicators of social and economic conditions within the community. Households include all related and unrelated persons who occupy a housing unit. There are 30,867 households in Oconee County, with an average household size of 2.42 persons. This is slightly lower than the statewide average household size of 2.55 persons. More than two-thirds (67.8%) of County households consist of a family – defined as two or more persons living in the same household who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption. The percentage of family households countywide is similar to the percentage statewide at 66.4%. There are 20,932 families



in the County, with an average family size of 2.89 – lower than the State average of 3.13 persons per family. Nearly three-fourths (74.4%) of County family households consist of a married couple and 28% of these families include children younger than 18 years. Females with no husband present comprise 17.8% of all family households (3,724 households) and almost half of these include a child under 18 years of age.

More than a quarter (25.8%) of all County households include a child under the age of 18 and over a third (36.2%) include at least one person aged 65 or older (Table 2-18). There are 9,935 non-family households, representing 32.2% of all Oconee County households. Most of the County's non-family households (86.9%) consist of an individual living alone, with 45.3% of these single-person householders aged 65 years or older.

Table 2-18. Household Type and Size, 2016

Households (HH) by Type	Oconee County		South Carolina	
	#	% all HH	#	% all HH
Total households	30,867	100.0%	1,839,041	100.0%
Family households (families) - Total	20,932	67.8%	1,220,791	66.4%
<i>With own children under 18 yrs</i>	6,963	33.3%	485,629	39.8%
Married-couple family	15,572	74.4%	863,581	70.7%
<i>With own children under 18 yrs</i>	4,378	28.1%	304,068	35.2%
Female householder, no husband present	3,724	17.8%	273,143	22.4%
<i>With own children under 18 yrs</i>	1,831	49.2%	144,710	53.0%
Non-family households - Total	9,935	32.2%	618,250	33.6%
Householder living alone	8,634	86.9%	520,544	84.2%
<i>Householder 65 years and over</i>	3,914	45.3%	192,623	37.0%
Households with children under 18 yrs	7,956	25.8%	562,826	30.6%
Households with persons 65+ yrs	11,182	36.2%	532,420	29.0%
Average household size (persons)	2.42		2.55	
Average family size (persons)	2.89		3.13	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

4. Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is a key indicator of current and future earnings potential. As shown in Table 2-19, educational levels measurably improved in Oconee County between 2000 and 2016. The percentage of County residents with a Bachelor's degree or higher rose from 18.2% to 23.5%. Likewise, the percentage of residents with some college, including those with an associate degree, increased from 22.5% to 28.8%. The percentage of County residents who lack a high school education dropped by almost 10% from 2000 to 2016.

Nearly 84% of County residents aged 25 and older have completed high school. This percentage is slightly lower than the 86% of residents statewide who have earned a high school diploma. Slightly over 16% of County residents did not graduate from high school, with only 6.2% of these adults having less than a 9th grade education. These percentages reflect the statewide trend.



Oconee County is similar to the State in the percentage of residents with postsecondary degrees, with 8.9% of County residents holding an associate degree, 13.9% a baccalaureate degree, and 9.6% a graduate or professional degree. Statewide, 9.1% of South Carolinians have earned an associate degree, 16.9% a baccalaureate degree, and 9.6% a graduate or professional degree.

Table 2-19. Educational Attainment, 2000 and 2016

Educational Attainment	Oconee County				South Carolina			
	2000		2016		2000		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Population 25 Years and Over	45,896	100.0%	53,965	100.0%	2,596,010	100.0%	3,269,424	100.0%
Less Than 9th Grade	5,118	11.2%	3,329	6.2%	215,776	8.3%	153,262	4.7%
9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma	6,877	15.0%	5,468	10.1%	398,503	15.4%	302,825	9.3%
High School Graduate*	15,237	33.2%	16,963	31.4%	778,054	30.0%	963,022	29.5%
Some College, No Degree	7,420	16.2%	10,698	19.8%	500,194	19.3%	686,140	21.0%
Associate Degree	2,913	6.3%	4,817	8.9%	173,428	6.7%	299,118	9.1%
Bachelor's Degree	5,060	11.0%	7,486	13.9%	351,526	13.5%	551,968	16.9%
Graduate/Professional Degree	3,271	7.1%	5,204	9.6%	178,529	6.9%	313,089	9.6%

*Includes equivalency

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2012-2016 ACS

5. Income and Poverty

Household and family incomes in Oconee County are lower than household incomes statewide. Median household income in the County is \$41,818, more than \$5,000 lower than the State median of \$46,898 (Table 2-20). Similarly, the County's median family income at \$52,310 is \$5,848 lower than the median family income for all South Carolinians.

Table 2-20. Median Household and Family Income, 2016

Jurisdiction	Median Household Income	Median Family Income
Oconee County	\$41,818	\$52,310
Salem	\$40,833	\$42,143
Seneca	\$35,236	\$51,904
Walhalla	\$30,973	\$28,203
Westminster	\$31,510	\$42,917
West Union	\$28,676	\$29,861
South Carolina	\$46,898	\$58,158

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

Median household income among the County's municipalities ranges from a high of \$40,833 in Salem to a low of \$28,676 in West Union. Seneca has the highest median family income at \$51,904, while Walhalla posted the lowest median family income among the municipalities at \$28,861.



Per capita income for Oconee County residents at \$25,944 is slightly higher than that of South Carolina at \$25,521, but trails the national income of \$29,829 (Table 2-21). Income growth for local residents has exceeded the State, with a 36.8% increase in per capita personal income in Oconee County from 1999 to 2016. This rate is higher than State rate of 35.8%, but behind the national growth rate of 38.2%.

Table 2-21. Per Capita Income, 1999 and 2016

Jurisdiction	1999	2016	% Change 1999-2016
Oconee County	\$ 18,965	\$ 25,944	36.8%
South Carolina	\$ 18,795	\$ 25,521	35.8%
United States	\$ 21,587	\$ 29,829	38.2%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2012-2016 ACS

Table 2-22 details the per capita income for racial and ethnic groups in Oconee County. The County ranked 10th statewide in per capita income in 2016. While the per capita income for the County's African-American residents at \$16,629 is close to the income for African-American residents statewide, it is \$12,923 lower than the per capita income for the County's Caucasian residents. Countywide per capita income for Caucasians at \$25,944 is slightly higher than for Caucasians throughout the State at \$25,521. Per capita income among the County's Hispanic residents at \$12,047 is lower than that of Hispanics statewide at \$15,236.

Table 2-22. Per Capita Income by Race, 2016

Jurisdiction	All Persons	Caucasian	African-American	Hispanic
Oconee County	\$ 25,944	\$ 27,361	\$ 16,629	\$ 12,047
Salem	\$ 20,191	\$ 20,748	N/A*	N/A*
Seneca	\$ 23,692	\$ 28,849	\$ 15,180	\$ 12,839
Walhalla	\$ 15,895	\$ 17,026	\$ 12,217	\$ 6,856
Westminster	\$ 18,406	\$ 19,139	\$ 12,272	N/A*
West Union	\$ 15,147	\$ 18,013	\$ 12,457	\$ 9,222
South Carolina	\$ 25,521	\$ 29,767	\$ 16,844	\$ 15,236

*Per Capita Income not available

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

Within Oconee County municipalities, the City of Seneca has the highest per capita income at \$23,692. West Union has the lowest per capita income at \$15,147. Per capita income among all racial and ethnic groups is highest in Seneca. For Caucasians, per capita income was highest in Seneca at \$28,849 and lowest in Walhalla at \$17,026. The highest per capita income for African-Americans is in Seneca at \$15,180, while African-American per capita income was lower in Walhalla, Westminster, and West Union. The lowest per capita income for Hispanic residents in Walhalla was only \$6,856.



An examination of household income by age reveals that the age group that includes Oconee County's youngest baby-boomers (residents aged 45-to-64) have the County's highest median household income at \$49,191. Incomes are also higher for persons aged 25-to-44 at \$41,790. The lowest median household income is found among the County's youngest residents (aged 25 years and younger) at \$24,333, followed by the County's older residents (aged 65 and older) at \$37,345.

County income levels are lower within all age groups than for residents of South Carolina, with the exception of residents under 25 years of age (Table 2-23). However, the median household income for County residents in this age group is only \$113 higher than the median household income for that age group statewide.

Table 2-23. Median Household Income by Age of Householder, 2016

Age of Householder	Oconee County	South Carolina
All Householders	\$ 41,818	\$ 46,898
15 to 25 years	\$ 24,333	\$ 24,220
25 to 44 years	\$ 41,790	\$ 50,671
45 to 64 years	\$ 49,191	\$ 54,421
65 years and over	\$ 37,345	\$ 37,795

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

As listed in Table 2-24 and illustrated in Map 2-6, Tract 303 (north and east of Walhalla and bordering Lake Keowee), has the highest median household income in the County at \$60,632. Median household income was also higher at \$56,938 in adjacent tract 306.01 (northern area of Seneca and southern Lake Keowee) and tract 302 (northeastern Oconee County) at \$53,939. Tract 307.01 that covers the southeastern portion of Seneca has the lowest median income at \$30,919. Median household income was also lower at \$31,092 in tract 311 (southwestern Oconee County with a portion of Westminster) and in tract 304.01 that includes most of Walhalla at \$31,572.

Per capita income was highest in tract 306.02 (bordered by Lake Keowee and Pickens County near Clemson) at \$42,245, followed by a per capita income of \$41,664 in tract 302 (northern Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee). Rural tract 311 and tract 307.01 that includes a southern portion of Seneca had the lowest per capita incomes at only \$16,440 and \$16,577, respectively.



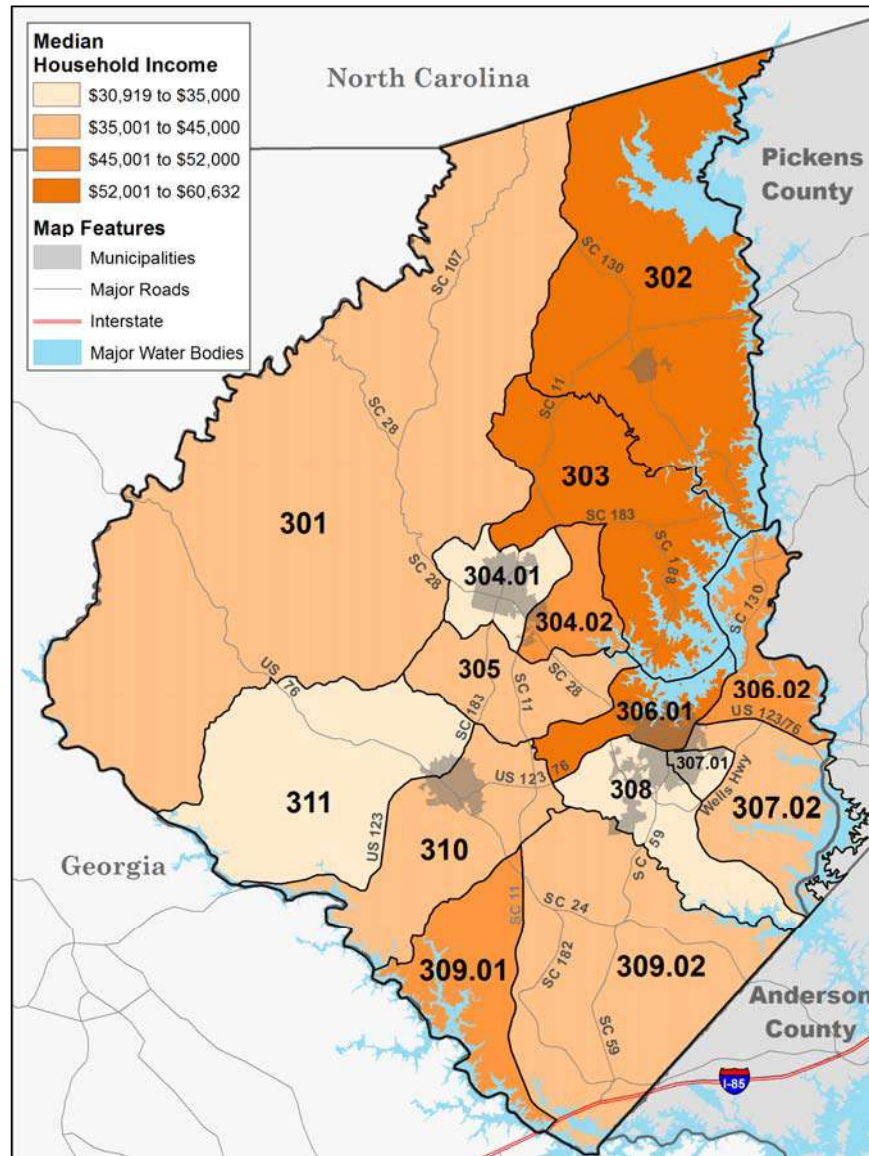
Table 2-24. Oconee County Income by Census Tract, 2016

Census Tract	Median Household Income	Per Capita Income
301	\$ 38,182	\$ 20,343
302	\$ 53,939	\$ 41,664
303	\$ 60,632	\$ 32,532
304.01	\$ 31,572	\$ 18,106
304.02	\$ 48,393	\$ 23,809
305	\$ 36,541	\$ 22,863
306.01	\$ 56,938	\$ 33,277
306.02	\$ 51,042	\$ 42,245
307.01	\$ 30,919	\$ 16,577
307.02	\$ 43,364	\$ 21,061
308	\$ 33,765	\$ 23,221
309.01	\$ 51,771	\$ 32,762
309.02	\$ 41,320	\$ 23,673
310	\$ 39,545	\$ 21,094
311	\$ 31,092	\$ 16,440

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2016 ACS



Map 2-6. Median Household Income by Census Tract, 2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

Poverty is defined as having insufficient resources to meet basic living expenses, including the costs of food, shelter, clothing, transportation and medical expenses. Among Oconee County households, 16.4% (5,076 households) live in poverty (Table 2-25). More than half (53.3%) of these households in poverty are families. Approximately one-third (38.7%) of families living in poverty are married couples and 19.3% include related children under 18 years old. Over half (52.5%) of the families living in poverty are headed by a female with no husband present, with the majority of these families (1,154 families) including children less than 18 years of age.

Non-family households comprise 46.7% of the County’s households in poverty. Females living alone comprise more than 60% of non-family households in the County living in poverty. Nearly



one-fourth (23.5%) of Oconee's non-family households living in poverty include a single female aged 65 or older, while only 6.7% include a single male 65 years of age or older.

Table 2-25. Poverty Status by Household Type, 2016

Family Type	Oconee County		South Carolina	
	#	%	#	%
Total Households	30,867	100.0%	1,839,041	100.0%
Households Living Below Poverty Level	5,076	16.4%	299,882	16.3%
Family Households Living Below Poverty Level	2,705	53.3%	156,452	52.2%
Married Couple Family	1,046	38.7%	48,063	30.7%
<i>With Related Children under 18 years</i>	521	19.3%	27,448	17.5%
Female Householder, no Husband Present	1,419	52.5%	92,732	59.3%
<i>With Related Children under 18 years</i>	1,154	42.7%	79,043	50.5%
Nonfamily Households Living Below Poverty Level	2,371	46.7%	143,430	47.8%
Female Householder Alone	1,426	60.1%	85,976	59.9%
<i>65 Years and over</i>	557	23.5%	29,933	20.9%
Male Householder Alone	945	39.9%	57,454	40.1%
<i>65 Years and over</i>	160	6.7%	9,950	6.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

Nearly 19% of Oconee County residents live in poverty. This is higher than the State and national rates of 17.2% and 15.1%, respectively (Table 2-26). The highest percentage of County residents living in poverty includes persons between 18 and 44 years of age at 42.1%. Well over one-fourth (29.1%) of Oconee County residents living in poverty are children under the age of 17. Seniors aged 65 and older living in poverty comprise 9.8% of the County population, or 1,351 senior residents.

Table 2-26. Poverty Status by Age, 2016

	Oconee County		South Carolina		United States	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Persons*	74,704	---	4,693,266	---	310,629,645	---
Persons in Poverty	13,806	18.5%	806,422	17.2%	46,932,225	15.1%
Under 5 years	1,372	9.9%	83,749	10.4%	4,614,933	9.8%
5 to 17 years	2,653	19.2%	186,356	23.1%	10,720,850	22.8%
18 to 44 years	5,814	42.1%	302,059	37.5%	18,401,450	39.2%
45 to 64	2,616	18.9%	163,363	20.3%	8,999,565	19.2%
65 to 74 years	700	5.1%	39,087	4.8%	2,210,809	4.7%
75 years and over	651	4.7%	31,808	3.9%	1,984,618	4.2%

*Persons for whom poverty is determined

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

The percentages of the County's White and African-American residents living in poverty are similar at 18% and 18.7%, respectively (Table 2-27). While the percentage of African-American residents living in poverty is lower than the percentages statewide and nationwide, the



percentages of White residents and residents of other races in poverty are higher. Significantly higher poverty rates are found among County residents of other races (27.3%) and of two or more races (26.5%). Most significant is the poverty rate among Hispanic residents in the County at more than 40%.

Table 2-27. Persons with Income below Poverty by Race and Ethnicity, 2016

Race	Oconee County			South Carolina			United States		
	Total	In Poverty		Total	In Poverty		Total	In Poverty	
		#	%		#	%		#	%
Total All Persons ¹	74,704	13,806	18.5%	4,693,266	806,422	17.2%	310,629,645	46,932,225	15.1%
White	65,975	11,903	18.0%	3,172,266	393,568	12.4%	228,440,346	28,424,685	12.4%
African-American	5,418	1,012	18.7%	1,271,610	350,792	27.6%	38,562,630	10,111,248	26.2%
Other Races	1,774	484	27.3%	154,919	36,600	23.6%	34,183,313	6,576,421	19.2%
2 or more Races	1,537	407	26.5%	94,471	25,462	27.0%	9,443,356	1,819,871	19.3%
Hispanic ²	3,688	1,485	40.3%	248,459	72,146	29.0%	54,085,091	12,653,597	23.4%

¹Population for whom poverty is determined

²Hispanic is an ethnic category in the Census, therefore persons of Hispanic Origin may be of any race

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

F. SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Special populations can experience a greater need for community services than the public as a whole. Data reveals that special populations in Oconee County include residents with low incomes, the elderly, and single-parent families. Consideration of these residents and their needs should be addressed through each Plan element.

1. Elderly

The needs of an aging population can increase demand for services such as adult day care, home meal delivery, in-home respite services, home repair and modification, transportation services, long-term care, and focused recreational and fitness programs. Oconee County has the highest percentage of residents 65 years and older among the six Appalachian Region counties at 21.5% (ACS, 2016). The percentage of older female residents in the County is even higher at 22.6%. Nearly 10%, or 1,351 of these Oconee County seniors, live in poverty. The poverty rate for senior females is more than double that of males. More than one-third (35%) of households with one or more people aged 65 and older are comprised of elderly persons living alone. One of every three County seniors (6,203 persons) has a disability and of these, 28.8% (1,788 persons) has cognitive difficulty. Over 2,330 elderly persons in the County have difficulty living independently.

2. Veterans

South Carolina's large veteran population often has special needs in the areas of long-term care, employment assistance, homelessness, and medical care. The 2012-2016 ACS reported that there were 6,508 veterans living in Oconee County. Nearly one fourth (24.2%) of the County's senior residents (aged 65 and older) and 21.3% of males are veterans. Veterans comprise 10.8% of the County population. Area veterans are attracted to the Upstate Region by the factors that appeal to other retirees – temperate weather, recreation, cultural and natural amenities, and lower housing prices.

More than 60% of living veterans in Oconee County (3,933 veterans) are aged 65 years or older (ACS, 2016). Over one-third of all Oconee County veterans (2,197 veterans) are disabled. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development estimates that 12.3% of South Carolina's homeless population are veterans, with many more living in poverty and at risk of becoming homeless. These conditions generate a growing need for a full spectrum of home and community-based support programs. The number and percentage of disabled veterans continues to climb as aging veterans of the baby boom era develop disabilities and younger service personnel suffer disabling injuries while serving in recent conflicts.

3. Hispanic Population

According to the 2012-2016 ACS, 17.3% of the population of the United States is Hispanic or Latino as compared to 12.5% in 2000. In South Carolina, the Hispanic population has more than doubled from 2.4% in 2000 to 5.3% of the State's total population. These numbers do not include an estimated 87,000 undocumented immigrants (Migration Policy Institute, 2018).

In Oconee County, 4.9% of the population (3,700 persons) is Hispanic, more than double the 1,562 persons of Hispanic origin (2.4%) in 2000. The County ranks 18th highest statewide in the percentage of Hispanic population and 17th in the number of Hispanic residents. In addition to being predominantly Mexican (71.4%), ACS data reveals that the County's Hispanic population is evenly divided between females and males, with a median age of 25.3 years. Over 40% of Hispanics in Oconee County (1,485 persons) live in poverty. Nearly one-fifth of the County's Hispanic residents (637 persons) speak little-to-no English and nearly one-fourth (870 persons) lack a high school education. Communication is a major issue of concern for many Hispanic residents, who often find it difficult to find and obtain government services, health care, and other essential services because they do not understand materials that are provided only in English and cannot communicate effectively with providers in person or online if only English is spoken.

The continued growth of the County's Hispanic population will create new service demands on local service providers, particularly the School District and area health care providers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that while Hispanics in the United States have slightly lower rates of heart disease and cancer than Caucasians, they have 24% more poorly



controlled high blood pressure, 23% more obesity, are 28% less likely to be screened for colorectal cancer, and are 50% more likely to die from diabetes or liver disease (*CDC, 2015*). Hispanics are more likely to lack health insurance than any other racial or ethnic group, with one in four uninsured (*National Center for Health Statistics, 2015*). Language barriers can compound these factors. The local hospital emergency room is a common point for medical treatment for immigrant residents who often lack a primary care physician (*Hispanic Access Foundation, 2016*).

4. Homeless Population

The homeless population encompasses a broad range of individuals and families with special needs. National research indicates that more than one third (37%) are in families and nearly two-thirds (63%) are individuals (*National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2016*). More than 8% of the Nation's homeless population are veterans. Homelessness is a significant risk factor for a broad range of health and social problems. Alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, and mental illness are common problems among the adult homeless population. Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness, with 15.8% of the Nation's homeless adults identified as survivors of domestic violence (*HUD Continuum of Care Homeless Populations and Subpopulations Report, 2017*). While families who are doubling up (staying) with friends or relatives because they have no other housing options are not included in the HUD definition of homeless individuals and families, they are often at risk of losing that shelter and becoming homeless. Doubled-up friends or families often impose space and financial burdens on the host family and the guests are often asked to leave after a short time. In smaller and more rural communities with no public shelters, doubling up is often the stop-gap measure before sleeping on the streets.

Oconee County is located within the service and planning area of the Upstate Consortium Continuum of Care (Upstate CoC) that encompasses a 13-county region that spans Abbeville, Anderson, Cherokee, Edgefield, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Oconee, Pickens, Saluda, Spartanburg and Union Counties. The Upstate Continuum consists of more than 80 partner agencies that provide services to the homeless or near homeless. Oconee County is also a member of the local Tri-County Chapter that includes Anderson and Pickens Counties.

Although methodologies exist to count the homeless who take advantage of services offered by various agencies, it is a challenge to determine the true number of homeless within the County. The most accurate assessment of the homeless population at the county, state and national levels is provided through bi-annual *point-in-time* (PIT) counts. In an effort to standardize homeless counts nationwide, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development mandated that an unduplicated count of homeless persons and families be conducted in each state every two years. Point-in-time counts are one-night counts of both sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations.

United Housing Connections provides the organization and planning for recent point-in-time counts in the Upstate CoC region. The homeless count includes those in shelters, in transitional housing, living on the street, or in other locations not meant for human habitation. The most

recent point-in-time count was conducted in January 2018. On that date, 54 individuals were counted as homeless in Oconee County (*S.C. Point in Time Count Report, 2018*). Of these individuals, 16 were unsheltered and 38 were housed in shelters or temporary housing. Included in the count were three veterans and nine chronically homeless persons. This is a decrease from the 2017 PIT count for Oconee County that reported a total of 63 homeless individuals, of which 22 were unsheltered and 41 were sheltered.

Oconee County has a number of precariously housed families and individuals who are at risk for homelessness based on cost-burden, overcrowding, and income eligibility for the federal school lunch program. Residents with low and moderate incomes can have difficulty affording adequate and safe housing in Oconee County. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines low and moderate income (LMI) households as those households with incomes below 80% of median family income (MFI). More than 40% of all Oconee County households are considered to be LMI. More than one-fourth (25.7%) of all households in Oconee County (7,840 households) are cost-burdened, paying more than 30% of their income for housing costs (*U.S. HUD CHAS Data, 2018*). At particular risk for homelessness are households that spend more than half of their income on housing and related expenses. Housing costs exceed more than half (50%) of household income for 2,020 homeowners in Oconee County, or 8.9% of all owner-occupied units. Among renter households, 22.9%, or 1,815 households, pay more than 50% of their monthly income in housing costs. These households are considered at risk for homelessness, sometimes spending so much for housing that other life necessities such as medical care and food must be deferred.

Housing overcrowding results from doubling up with family and friends is often the last resort to ending up on the streets. Housing units are considered to be overcrowded when there are 1.01 or more household members per room, including baths and kitchens. In Oconee County, 627 housing units are overcrowded based on this definition (*2012-2016 ACS*).

Free and reduced lunch data for Oconee County schools also indicates a significant number of low-income households. To be eligible for the school lunch program, families must meet annual criteria based on household size and income. Under the guidelines for the 2018-2019 school year, a family of four making \$46,435 (\$893 per week) or less would be eligible for reduced price meals and the same family making \$32,630 (\$628 per week) or less would be eligible for free meals (*U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2018*). Children who are members of households that are eligible to receive Food Stamps or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) are automatically eligible for free meals. More than half (51.2%) of students countywide, or 5,202 students in grades K-5 through 12, meet federal income eligibility limits for free or reduced lunch (*Oconee County School District, 2018*).



G. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The goals, objectives and strategies for implementation (GOIS) table summarizes the actions that will be undertaken in the coming decade to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the Population element.

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Goal 2.1. Improve the quality of life for existing and future residents of Oconee County.		
Objective 2.1.1. Increase understanding of the County’s population composition and characteristics.		
Strategy 2.1.1.1. Monitor demographic patterns in the County and its municipalities in order to respond to growth and the changing needs of residents, especially special populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Service Providers 	2023
Strategy 2.1.1.2. Coordinate and collaborate with regional agencies and neighboring jurisdictions to share demographic data and update population projection data and methodologies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • ACOG • Neighboring Jurisdictions 	Annually
Objective 2.1.2. Encourage and attract young adults and families to remain in Oconee County.		
Strategy 2.1.2.1. Create economic opportunities for residents and potential residents through recruitment and retention of industries and businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • Chamber of Commerce • Clemson University 	Annually
Strategy 2.1.2.2. Develop and promote policies and programs that improve economic opportunity for residents and potential residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	Annually
Strategy 2.1.2.3. Develop opportunities to provide or encourage entertainment and recreation options that are attractive to young adults and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	Annually
Strategy 2.1.2.4. Interface with the School District of Oconee County (SDOC), private schools, Clemson University, and Tri-County Technical College (TCTC) to optimize educational quality and access to advanced training opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC • Private Schools • TCTC • Clemson University • Inter-regional Education Center representative 	2023



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Objective 2.1.3. Assess and seek to address the needs of the County's alternative populations.		
<u>Strategy 2.1.3.1.</u> Seek partnerships to assess the unmet needs of alternative populations and develop strategies and leverage resources to address these needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • State and Local Agencies • Non-profits • Interfaith Ministries 	Annually
<u>Strategy 2.1.3.2.</u> Provide opportunities for local service agencies and organizations to explore efforts to prevent and eliminate homelessness and provide needed services for the County's homeless population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • United Way • Local Service Agencies and Organizations • Faith-based Organizations 	Annually
<u>Strategy 2.1.3.3.</u> Reduce language barriers in the provision of health care, public safety, and other public services to all Oconee County residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Health Providers • Other Public Service Providers 	2025
<u>Strategy 2.1.3.4.</u> Assess measures to accommodate the needs of the County's aging population in areas such as signage, lighting, and transportation options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • CAT Bus Service 	2025
Goal 2.2. Promote a livable community in which County residents are healthy, supported, and productive.		
Objective 2.2.1. Ensure access to adequate health care and preventative services.		
<u>Strategy 2.2.1.1.</u> Coordinate the provision of a continuum of supportive services, home repair programs, and infrastructure that enable elderly residents to <i>age in place</i> to the extent possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Council on Aging • Faith-based Organizations • Oconee County Department of Social Services (DSS) • Oconee County Disabilities & Special Needs Board (DSNB) • YMCA • SDOC 	2025



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<p><u>Strategy 2.2.1.2.</u> Support access to adequate health care facilities and services for all segments of the population to reduce the incidence and high costs associated with chronic health conditions for local residents, especially geriatric care and accessible care for veterans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee Memorial Hospital/Prisma Health • County Health Department • DSNB • Rosa Clark Free Medical Clinic • YMCA • SDOC • Nonprofits 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 2.2.1.3.</u> Provide a range of fitness and recreational opportunities that encourage health and well-being and that also safely accommodate residents with disabilities, older adults, youth, families, and other special needs populations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SDOC • YMCA 	<p>2025</p>
<p>Objective 2.2.2. Promote educational attainment and job readiness among County residents.</p>		
<p><u>Strategy 2.2.2.1.</u> Create a safe and healthy environment for education and socialization for students at all levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SDOC • TCTC 	<p>2023</p>
<p><u>Strategy 2.2.2.2.</u> Support and promote workforce development programs that address the skilled labor needs of current and potential employers in the County in trades, high tech, and high demand pathways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Worklink WIA • SDOC • Tri-County Technical College • Oconee Adult Education • Local Employers 	<p>2021</p>
<p><u>Strategy 2.2.2.3.</u> Support local efforts to raise literacy levels of County residents through afterschool programs, family and early literacy efforts, and church-based programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SDOC • Oconee County Adult Education/Literacy Program • Faith-based Providers 	<p>2026</p>



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Goal 2.3. Foster a high level of efficiency, coordination, and cooperation among County and municipal services.		
Objective 2.3.1. Coordinate planning efforts among the County, municipalities, and neighboring jurisdictions.		
Strategy 2.3.1.1. Review and/or update the County's Population Element at least once every five years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2023
Strategy 2.3.1.2. Coordinate service delivery planning among the County, municipalities, and neighboring jurisdictions to eliminate duplication of effort and address long-term needs of residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Utilities • Neighboring Jurisdictions • ACOG 	2025
Strategy 2.3.1.3. Foster on-going coordination and communication among Oconee County, municipalities, and neighboring jurisdictions on a wide range of issues including land use planning and regulation, facilities planning, transportation, and the extension and upgrade of utilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • ACOG • Neighboring Jurisdictions • Utility Providers • Nonprofits 	Annually
Strategy 2.3.1.4. Review current land use planning, building codes, zoning and development regulations, and other County ordinances for potential impact on population growth and special populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2022



Chapter 3. Housing Element

Adequate, safe housing is a basic human need. The American Public Health Association ranks housing as one of the top three issues affecting personal and community health. The quality, availability, and affordability of a community's housing stock weighs heavily in the decision-making process of businesses and employers when considering new locations. Newcomers to Oconee County consider a variety of factors when choosing their new homes such as quality of schools, public safety, and convenience to jobs and services, as well as other community amenities. However, the deciding factor in housing choice is typically the quality and affordability of the available homes in an area.

The purpose of the Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan is to assess the condition, availability, and affordability of Oconee County's housing stock and to project future housing needs. The prediction of future housing needs poses a distinct challenge as homes are essentially expensive consumer products with a demand that is greatly influenced by economic conditions. Interest rates and the overall economy have dramatic effects on the housing market. When such factors make home ownership unattainable for lower income persons, many residents find themselves dependent on the rental market. This element considers both owner-occupied and rental housing needs for the next ten years in Oconee County and its municipalities.

Oconee County is faced with a myriad of possibilities and challenges in planning for future housing needs. A thorough study of current housing conditions and probable trends for the future can identify a balance of housing types to accommodate the diverse housing needs of current and future County residents.

A. HOUSING GROWTH

Growth in housing supply is closely associated with population growth. While population growth can provide the impetus for an increase in housing supply, a housing stock that offers variety, affordability, and quality can also attract people to a community. Oconee County experienced a 12.2% increase in population from 2000 to 2010, accompanied by a 19.7% increase in housing units. Housing growth outpaced population growth by 7.5% during this period. This disparity between population and housing growth rates can be attributed in part to movement of current residents from older housing units to newer homes, resulting in no population increase, but higher housing vacancy rates – rising from 15.7% in 2000 to 21.1% in 2016.

Beyond the general counts provided in the 2000 and 2010 Census, detailed housing data is available through the American Community Survey (ACS) in single-year and multi-year compilations. The most reliable and accessible of these are the five-year ACS estimates that are based on 60 months of collected data at all geographic levels including municipalities, Census tracts, block groups, and blocks. The most recent five-year ACS is the 2012 to 2016 survey.

As detailed in Table 3-1, Oconee County has 39,139 housing units, with 7,632 (19.5%) of these units located in incorporated areas, including 4,230 units in the City of Seneca. The 19.7% growth



rate in the Oconee County housing supply from 2000 to 2010 mirrors housing growth statewide at 21.9%. In contrast, housing growth among the County’s municipalities has varied widely in since 2000. Housing growth ranged from 10.9% (399 units) in Seneca and 8.6% (147 units) in Walhalla to an 8% (106 units) loss in the number of housing units in Westminster from 2000 to 2010. Seneca added 154 housing units from 2010 to 2016, followed by Westminster at 54 units and Walhalla at 44 units.

Table 3-1. Housing Unit Growth, County and Municipalities, 2010 to 2016

Jurisdiction	2000 Census	2010 Census	# Change 2000-2010	% Change 2000-2010	2016 ACS	# Change 2010-2016	% Change 2010-2016
Oconee County	32,383	38,763	6,380	19.7%	39,139	376	1.0%
Salem	72	77	5	6.9%	72	-5	-6.5%
Seneca	3,677	4,076	399	10.9%	4,230	154	3.8%
Walhalla	1,705	1,852	147	8.6%	1,896	44	2.4%
Westminster	1,333	1,227	-106	-8.0%	1,281	54	4.4%
West Union	145	150	5	3.4%	153	3	2.0%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census and 2012-2016 ACS

Oconee County is the most rural of the ten counties in South Carolina’s Appalachian Region and ranks as the 18th most rural county statewide. More than 68% of its housing units (26,394 units) are located in rural areas outside of municipalities (Table 3-2). The percentage of rural housing units in the County is substantially higher than the 43.8% of statewide housing considered as rural. However, the County has become more urban in recent decades, with the percentage of urban housing units increasing from 24.9% in 1990 to 27.4% in 2000 and 31.9% in 2010. Urban housing units in Oconee County increased by more than a third in both the 1990s and the 2000s.

Table 3-2. Urban and Rural Housing Units in the County and State, 1990, 2000 and 2010

	1990		2000		2010		% change 1990-2000	% change 2000-2010
	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Oconee County	25,983	100.0%	32,383	100.0%	38,763	100.0%	24.6%	19.7%
Urban	6,460	24.9%	8,871	27.4%	12,369	31.9%	37.3%	39.4%
Rural	19,523	75.1%	23,512	72.6%	26,394	68.1%	20.4%	12.3%
South Carolina	1,424,155	100.0%	1,753,670	100.0%	2,137,683	100.0%	23.1%	21.9%
Urban	799,979	56.2%	1,073,187	61.2%	1,423,307	66.6%	34.2%	32.6%
Rural	624,176	43.8%	680,483	38.8%	714,376	33.4%	9.0%	5.0%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010; 1990 Census of Population and Housing: South Carolina

Housing growth by Census tract is provided in Table 3-3 and illustrated in Map 3-1. The percentage of growth among the County’s Census tracts from 2000 to 2010 ranged from a loss of 11 units in tract 307.01 (includes the southeastern portion of Seneca) to a 44.3% growth rate in tract 303 (west of Walhalla and bordering Lake Keowee). Tracts with the highest rates of growth are bordered by Lake Keowee or Lake Hartwell.



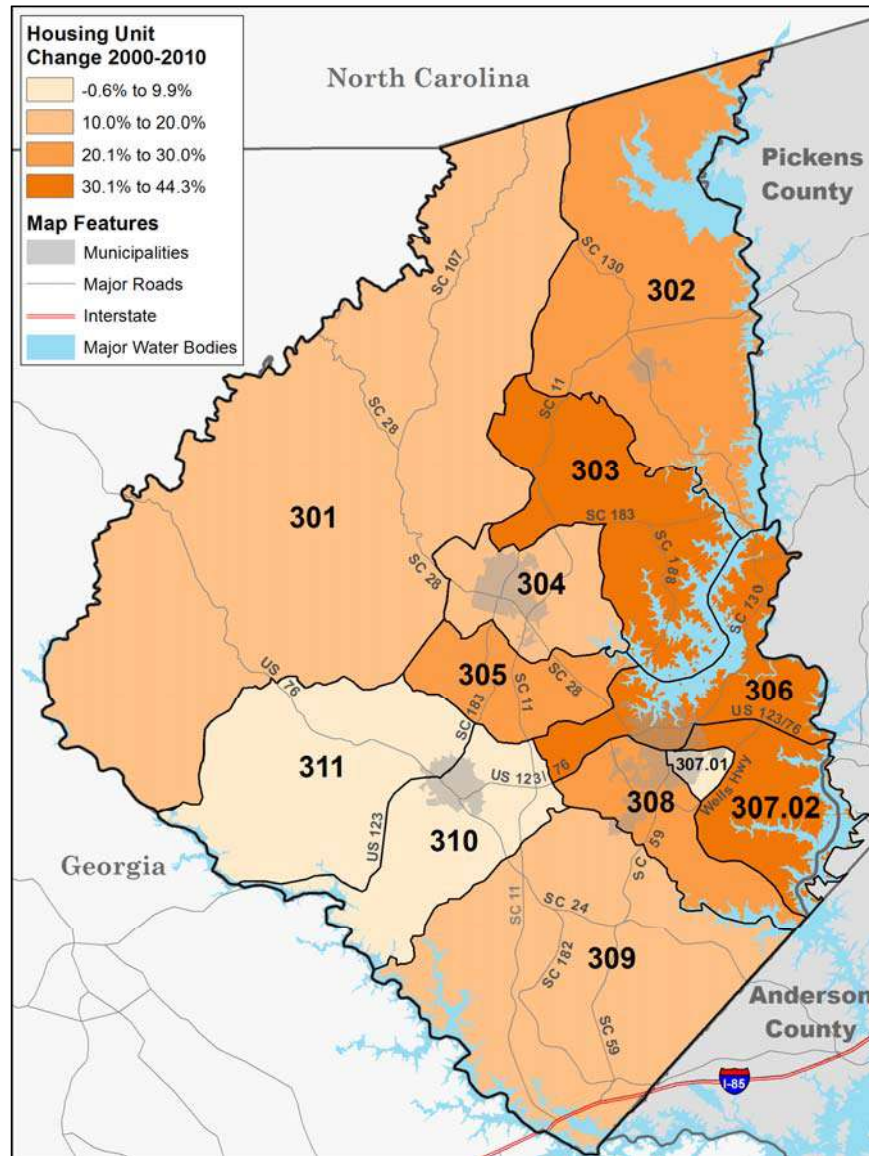
Table 3-3. Housing Unit (HU) Change by Census Tract, 2000, 2010 and 2016

2000 Census Tracts	2000 Census Housing Units	2010 Census Tracts	2010 Census Housing Units	2016 ACS Housing Units	% Change 2000-2010	% Change 2010-2016
301	2,405	301	2,645	2,645	10.0%	2.8%
302	3,137	302	3,889	4,026	24.0%	-4.1%
303	2,372	303	3,423	3,514	44.3%	11.1%
304	3,467	304.01	3,044	3,009	13.5%	-0.1%
		304.02	892	954		5.3%
305	1,783	305	2,177	2,220	22.1%	0.8%
306	3,331	306.01	2,323	2,406	34.3%	10.3%
		306.02	2,151	2,138		4.3%
307.01	1,878	307.01	1,867	1,907	-0.6%	4.5%
307.02	2,227	307.02	2,928	2,947	31.5%	7.1%
308	2,872	308	3,463	3,525	20.6%	-6.5%
309	4,682	309.01	1,921	2,061	17.9%	3.5%
		309.02	3,601	3,641		-2.0%
310	2,541	310	2,634	2,483	3.7%	-8.5%
311	1,688	311	1,805	1,663	6.9%	3.9%
Total	32,383		38,763	39,139	19.7%	1.0%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010; 2012-2016 ACS



Map 3-1. Housing Growth by Census Tract, 2000 to 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Census

1. Residential Building Permits

An examination of single-family residential building permits provides additional information on housing growth trends in recent years. Single-family residential permit data for Oconee County from 2014 to November 2018 is listed in Table 3-4 and illustrated in Figure 3-1. This data includes single-family, site-built construction as well as manufactured homes that were moved into the County.

Single-family, site-built homes accounted for nearly three-fourths (73.2%) of these permits (1,539 housing units) during the period. Permits for single-family, site-built homes have exceeded those



issued for newly located manufactured homes in each of these years. County permitting for single-family residential homes peaked in 2017 at 541 permits, with the lowest number issued in 2014 at only 270 permits. While permitting for manufactured homes has remained relatively steady since 2014, permitting for site-built homes rose sharply in 2016, a trend that continued in 2017. Based on permits issued through November 2018, single-family permitting for the current year is consistent with 2017 activity.

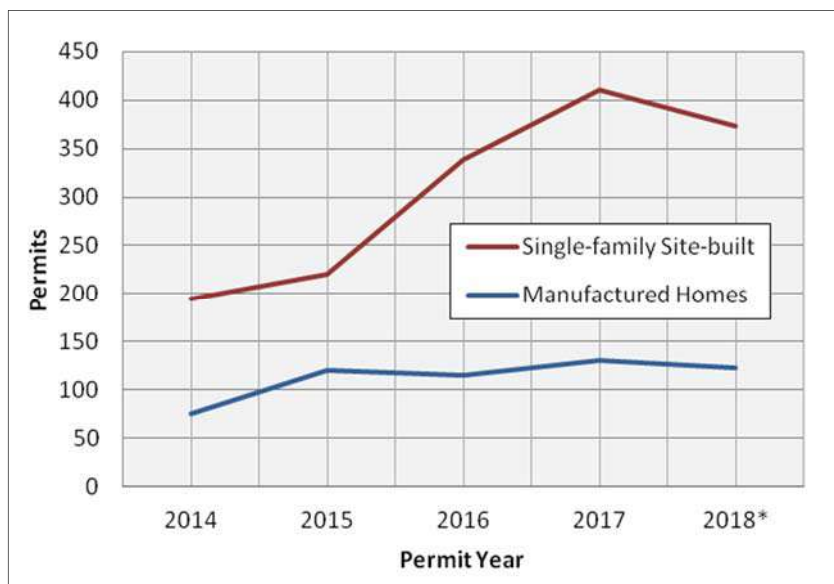
Table 3-4. Single-family Residential Housing Units Permitted, 2014 to November 2018

Year	Single-family Site-built Homes		Manufactured Homes		Totals
	#	%	#	%	
2014	195	72.2%	75	27.8%	270
2015	221	64.8%	120	35.2%	341
2016	339	74.7%	115	25.3%	454
2017	411	76.0%	130	24.0%	541
2018*	373	75.2%	123	24.8%	496
Total Units	1,539	73.2%	563	26.8%	2,102

*Permits issued through November 2018

Source: Oconee County Planning and Zoning, November 2018

Figure 3-1. New Single-family Residential Permits, 2014 to 2018*



*Permits issued through November 2018

Source: Oconee County Planning and Zoning, November 2018

B. HOUSING LOCATION

Land in residential use comprises more than 11% (42,909.5 acres) of the County’s unincorporated land area (Table 3-5). Single-family residential includes single-family homes, as well as manufactured homes on individual properties. Multi-family residential includes duplexes,



structures with three or more dwelling units, zero lot line and patio home developments, condominiums, and townhouses. Manufactured home parks in Oconee County are defined as “a parcel (or contiguous parcels) of land divided into two or more manufactured home lots for rent or sale.” Properties less than five acres in size that are classified as agriculture or forestry for tax purposes, but also include a residence, are shown as residential. Single-family is the most prevalent type of residential use, accounting for 98.3% of all residential land in the County. Only one percent of residential land is in use as manufactured home parks and less than one percent as multi-family. In addition, there are more than 3,000 properties larger than five acres in size and in use as agriculture or forestry that also include a residential use. Map 3-2 illustrates the location of residential uses in Oconee County.

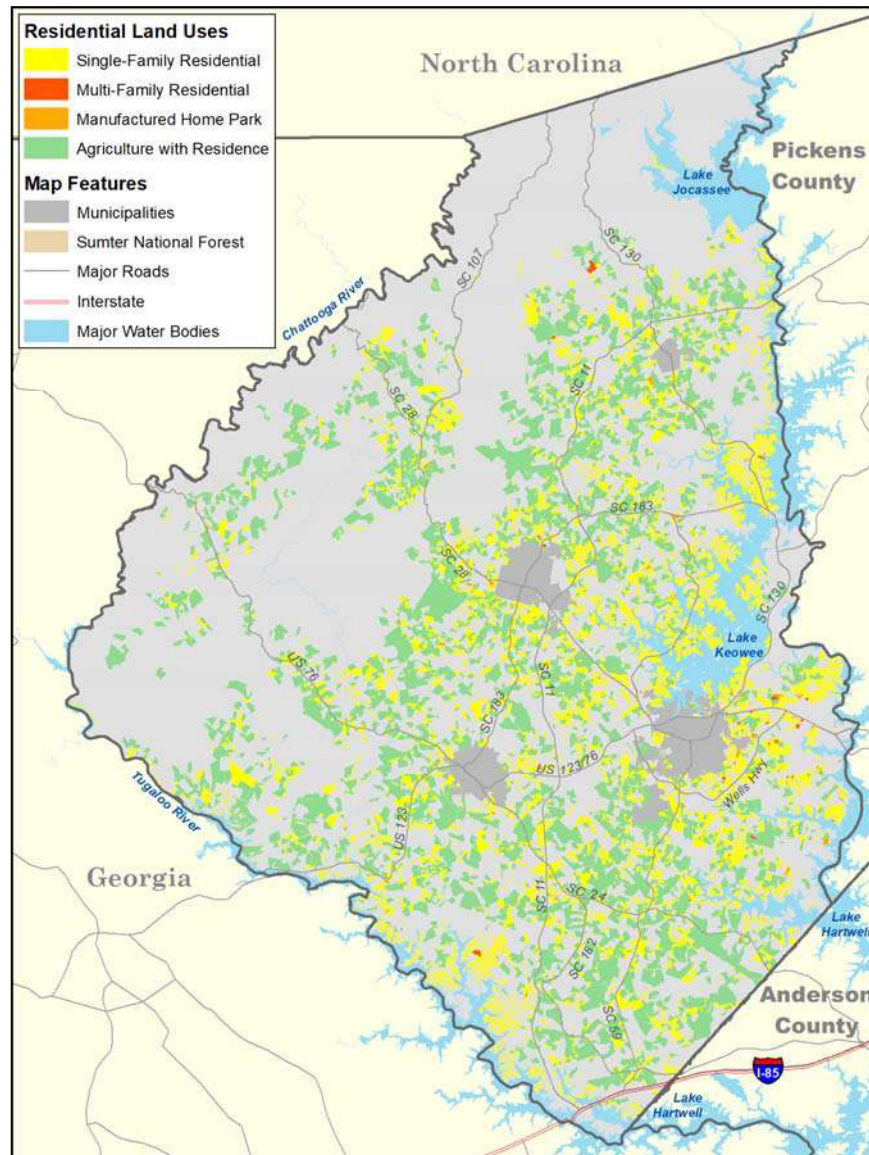
Table 3-5. Land Area by Residential Land Use, 2018

Land Use	Acres	% of All Residential
Single-Family	41,891.81	98.3%
Multi-Family	300.32	0.7%
Manufactured Home Park	422.14	1.0%
Total All Residential	42,614.27	100.0%
Total Acres		% Residential of Total Acres
Total All Land Uses	374,482.9	11.4%

Source: Oconee County Assessor, November 2018

Land in residential use is found throughout the unincorporated area of Oconee County, with the exception of land in the Sumter National Forest. Single-family homes are generally concentrated near municipalities, along major transportation routes, and along and near Lake Keowee and Lake Hartwell. Most of the County’s multi-family housing is found near the cities of Seneca and Walhalla and along the corridor between Seneca and Clemson, with some developments located near Lake Keowee and Lake Hartwell. Map 3-2 illustrates the location of land in residential use in the County.

Map 3-2. Land in Residential Use, 2018



Source: Oconee County Assessor, November 2018

C. HOUSING OUTLOOK

Housing growth projections are used by local governments to plan for infrastructure and services that will be needed to accommodate future growth. Predicting future housing unit growth for jurisdictions is influenced by the economy, interest rates, condition and availability of existing housing, infrastructure, in and out migration, job growth, and intangible factors such as buyer or renter preference. Additional factors for municipalities include annexation and land availability. These variables can significantly impact housing development in smaller jurisdictions, while the impacts on larger jurisdictions with larger populations and land area may be less measurable.



Claritas Pop-Facts data provides 2018 estimates and 5-year growth projections for housing units. Projections for 2030 can be made using yearly growth trends based on the five-year growth projections. However, assumptions based on these estimates require updating over time as they are influenced by other factors including household and family size, availability of new housing, in and out-migration, economic activity, and the availability of a range of appropriate housing options. These base projections of future housing growth can be adjusted as new information provides additional insight.

Oconee County's housing supply is projected to reach 43,518 units by 2030, a 12-year increase of 8.4%. Growth is also projected in each of the County's municipalities. The City of Seneca is projected to add 317 housing units in the coming decade, an increase of 7.7%. Housing in the Town of Walhalla will grow at a rate of 4.7%, or 91 additional housing units by 2028. While housing in the small town of West Union is projected to increase by 6.2%, this translates to only ten additional housing units. Modest housing growth is projected for the County's remaining municipalities. Table 3-6 includes housing unit estimates and projections for the County and five municipalities.

Table 3-6. Housing Unit Estimates and Projections

Jurisdiction	2010 ¹ Census	2018 ² EA Estimate	2023 ² EA Projection	2030 Projection	Projected Change 2018 - 2030	
					#	%
Oconee County	38,763	40,163	41,561	43,518	3,355	8.4%
Salem	70	65	66	67	2	3.7%
Seneca	3,953	4,124	4,256	4,441	317	7.7%
Walhalla	1,885	1,954	1,992	2,045	91	4.7%
Westminster	1,144	1,214	1,221	1,231	17	1.4%
West Union	139	156	160	166	10	6.2%

Sources: ¹U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census; ²Environics Analytics Pop-Facts Demographics Trend Report, 2018

The location of future housing growth is difficult to predict, with multiple factors at play in the development process such as the availability of water and sewer, proximity to major transportation routes, natural and other resources, employment centers, past development trends, and related amenities associated with urbanized areas. It is anticipated that much of the County's future residential development and growth will continue to be focused along the U.S. Highway 76/123 corridor between Seneca and Pickens County, in the areas surrounding the County's larger municipalities, and in the areas near Interstate 85 that offer an easy commute to the Greenville Metro area. Infill residential growth is also anticipated along the shores of Lake Keowee, with possible multi-family development in areas closest to Clemson and near Lake Hartwell.

Two developments are under construction off of U.S. Highway 123 near Clemson University that will add to the County's housing inventory. *Clemson Epoch* is a residential mixed-use development that will include a total of 298 housing units including cottages, townhouses and



apartments as well as a meeting house, market pavilion, café, and fitness facility. The development is on Jacobs Road near Clemson Boulevard, with units expected to be ready for occupancy in the fall of 2019. *Lakeside Lodge* is a 118-unit condo-hotel located off of Clemson Boulevard on Lake Hartwell. The Lodge is expected to be ready for occupancy by fall 2019. Condo-hotels typically combine traditional condo ownership with modified hotel amenities and services. Condos are sold to individual investors who may use the property as a vacation home and also may generate income through participation in a short-term on-site rental program, managed by a property management company.

Residential growth is possible on nearly all of the County's vacant land and land currently in use for agriculture or forestry, totaling almost 191,398 acres. Of this land, more than 89% (170,664 acres) is within the *Control Free* zoning district that currently allows all types of residential uses and densities. Nearly 12,500 acres of vacant or agriculture/forestry land is zoned as *Traditional Rural District* and allows detached single-family and multi-family residential uses, as well as residential subdivisions. Among the County's vacant or agriculture/forestry land, 6,354 acres is in the *Agricultural* zoning district that allows single-family detached residences and smaller residential subdivisions of ten lots or less.

D. HOUSING TYPE

Housing types available to Oconee County residents range from single-family units to multi-family housing. Single-family (one-unit detached) units are detached from other houses, with open space on all four sides. The Census Bureau includes single unit modular housing (built off-site and transported to the site) in the definition of single-family units, in addition to site-built homes. Single units that are attached (1-unit attached) have one or more walls extending from ground to roof that separate the unit from adjoining structures. Most single-family housing is constructed entirely on-site, in compliance with local building code standards. Duplexes include two housing units in one structure. Multi-family buildings contain more than two housing units within the structure. Manufactured (also known as mobile) homes are constructed off-site and transported to the site on wheels that are attached to the structure.

As of 2016, more than two-thirds (67.6%) of all housing units in the County were single-family, detached homes, a slight increase from the 2000 Census share of 63.2% (Table 3-7). These percentages exceeded the statewide percentages of 61.5% in 2000 and 62.9% in 2016. Costs for attached single-family and duplex construction are also generally less per housing unit than site-built single-family homes. However, in Oconee County these housing types make up a very small percentage of the total housing stock, together accounting for only 3.5% of all housing units.

Manufactured housing offers a less expensive alternative to site-built housing. Manufactured homes account for more than 20% of County housing units, a lower percentage than in 2000 when one in four housing units were manufactured homes. More than one in every five units (8,037 units) in the County's housing market is a manufactured home.

Table 3-7. Housing Unit Type, 2000 and 2016

Unit Type	Oconee County				South Carolina			
	2000		2016		2000		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Units	32,383	100.0%	39,424	100.0%	1,753,670	100.0%	2,236,262	100.0%
1 unit, detached	20,462	63.2%	26,641	67.6%	1,078,678	61.5%	1,406,900	62.9%
1 unit, attached	276	0.9%	767	1.9%	40,185	2.3%	70,730	3.2%
Duplex	634	2.0%	635	1.6%	43,607	2.5%	45,685	2.0%
Multi-family (3-19)	1,677	5.2%	3,016	7.7%	177,140	10.1%	230,218	10.3%
Multi-family (20+)	202	0.6%	328	0.8%	56,005	3.2%	112,634	5.0%
Mobile Home	8,923	27.6%	8,037	20.4%	355,499	20.3%	369,050	16.5%
Boat, RV, Van, etc.	209	0.6%	0	0.0%	2,556	0.1%	1,045	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2012-2016 ACS

Construction costs for multi-family development are generally less per housing unit. These lower construction costs are passed on as savings to buyers of condominium units and renters, making this housing type generally a less expensive alternative. Only 7.8% of the County's housing stock (3,344 units) is multi-family. Most of the County's multi-family housing (3,016 units) is in smaller developments of 3 to 19 units. This market segment has experienced significant growth, almost doubling from only 1,879 units in 2000 to 3,344 units by 2016. While affordable multi-family options continue to be needed for low and moderate income residents, some multi-family developments in areas within proximity to Clemson University have increasingly transitioned to housing for college students seeking affordable options close to campus. New projects are also oriented to students, including the *Epoch Clemson* development that will add 298 townhome and apartment units once completed in late 2019.

E. HOUSING AGE AND CONDITION

Oconee County housing is similar in age to housing statewide, with a median year built of 1986 (Table 3-8). The County's municipalities have older housing stock, with median year built of 1966 in Westminster to 1978 in Salem and Seneca.

Table 3-8. Year Housing Units Built, 2016

Jurisdiction	Total Units	2000 or later		1970 to 1999		1969 or earlier		Median Year
		#	%	#	%	#	%	
Oconee County	39,139	9,149	23.4%	20,620	52.7%	9,370	23.9%	1986
Salem	72	7	9.7%	40	55.6%	25	34.7%	1978
Seneca	4,230	760	18.0%	2,050	48.5%	1,420	33.6%	1978
Walhalla	1,896	169	8.9%	711	37.5%	1,016	53.6%	1968
Westminster	1,281	22	1.7%	544	42.5%	715	55.8%	1966
West Union	153	38	24.8%	60	39.2%	55	35.9%	1976
South Carolina	2,192,041	527,484	24.1%	1,141,691	52.1%	522,866	23.9%	1986

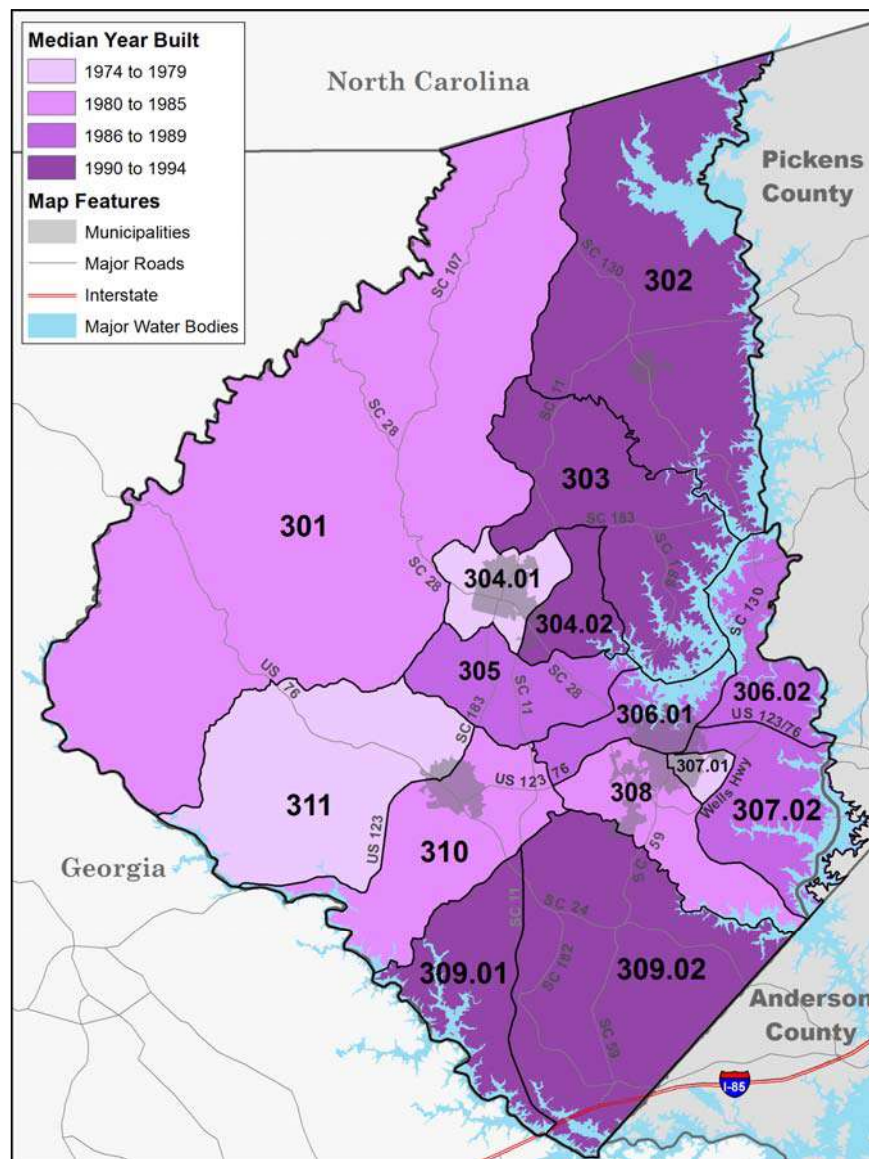
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS



Nearly one-fourth (23.9%) of Oconee County’s housing stock (9,370 units) was built 49 years ago or earlier. More than half of the County’s housing stock (20,620 units) was built between 1970 and 1999. Almost one-quarter of Oconee County housing (9,149 units) were built in 2000 or later, with 11% of these newer homes (1,003 units) built in 2010 or later.

As illustrated in Map 3-3, Census tracts with older housing include 307.01 (1974), 304.01 (1975), and 311 (1978). Smaller tract 307.01 includes the southeastern portion of Seneca, while tract 304.01 includes most of Walhalla and tract 311 includes a small northern portion of Westminster. Tracts with the newest median housing age include 304.02 (1994), 309.01 (1992), 303 (1991), and tracts 302 and 309.02 (1990). Three of these tracts are bordered by Lake Keowee and two are bordered by Lake Hartwell.

Map 3-3. Median Year Homes Built by Census Tract, 2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS



One indicator of housing condition is evidence of overcrowding. Housing units are considered to be crowded when there are 1.01 or more household members per room (including baths and kitchens). Only 2% of housing units in Oconee County (627 units) have 1.01 or more persons per room (Table 3-9). The City of Walhalla has the largest number of overcrowded homes among the County’s municipalities at 81 housing units. While West Union has the highest percentage of homes that are overcrowded at 9.4%, this equates to only 12 housing units.

Table 3-9. Persons per Room - Occupied Housing Units, 2016

Jurisdiction	2000			2016		
	Total Occupied Units	Units with 1.01+ Persons per Room		Total Occupied Units	Units with 1.01+ Persons per Room	
		#	%		#	%
Oconee County	27,283	571	2.1%	30,867	627	2.0%
Salem	53	4	7.5%	64	2	3.1%
Seneca	3,383	97	2.9%	3,826	28	0.7%
Walhalla	1,498	93	6.2%	1,594	81	5.1%
Westminster	1,226	26	2.1%	1,021	20	2.0%
West Union	132	14	10.6%	128	12	9.4%
South Carolina	1,533,854	49,338	3.2%	1,839,041	33,096	1.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2012-2016 ACS

Although specific data on housing condition in Oconee County is not available, input from local agencies and community stakeholders indicates the need to explore options for upgrading and replacing substandard housing in areas that include the Utica and Walhalla mill villages. Redevelopment of the former Utica Mill property has been identified as a potential catalyst to revitalize the surrounding area. The County is exploring various economic development incentives for these and other areas within the County.

F. HOUSING OCCUPANCY AND TENURE

The Oconee County housing market has a 21.1% vacancy rate, a substantial increase over the 2000 rate of 15.7%. This rate is significantly higher than the State rate of 16.1% (Table 3-10). The percentage of vacant housing units is varied among the County’s municipalities. Unoccupied units are most prevalent in Westminster at 20.3% (260 units), while only 9.6% of homes (404 units) are vacant in the City of Seneca and less than 16% (302 units) are unoccupied in Walhalla.

The County’s homeownership rate of 72.9% is well above the State rate of 68.4%. While homeownership in Salem at 84.4% is higher than both the County and the State, the other four municipalities have much lower ownership rates. Walhalla has the lowest owner-occupied rate at 55%.



Table 3-10. Housing Occupancy and Tenure, 2016

Jurisdiction	Total Units	Occupied Housing Units (HU)						Vacant Housing Units	
		Total Occupied HU		Owner Occupied		Renter Occupied		#	%
		#	%	#	%	#	%		
Oconee County	39,139	30,867	78.9%	22,517	72.9%	8,350	27.1%	8,272	21.1%
Salem	72	64	88.9%	54	84.4%	10	15.6%	8	11.1%
Seneca	4,230	3,826	90.4%	2,182	57.0%	1,644	43.0%	404	9.6%
Walhalla	1,896	1,594	84.1%	881	55.3%	713	44.7%	302	15.9%
Westminster	1,281	1,021	79.7%	591	57.9%	430	42.1%	260	20.3%
West Union	153	128	83.7%	82	64.1%	46	35.9%	25	16.3%
South Carolina	2,192,041	1,839,041	83.9%	1,258,661	68.4%	580,380	31.6%	353,000	16.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

As illustrated in Map 3-4, the highest concentrations of rental housing are found in Census tract 307.01 at 44.4% (includes a portion of Seneca), tract 304.01 at 38.2% (includes most of Walhalla), and tract 307.02 at 37.6% (bordered by Lake Hartwell near Clemson). The areas of the County with the lowest percentages of renters and the highest concentration of owner-occupied units are generally in the more rural areas of the County and range from 8.2% in tract 309.01 in the southwestern area of the County at the Georgia border to 15.7% in tract 304.02 that includes a small portion of Walhalla.

renter units is higher than for owner occupied units in all municipalities except for Seneca, where average household size for renter units is only 1.8 persons per housing unit.

Table 3-11. Average Household Size - Occupied Housing Units, 2016

Jurisdiction	Average Persons per Housing Unit		
	Total all Units	Owner-Occupied	Renter-Occupied
Oconee County	2.42	2.36	2.57
Salem	2.33	2.31	2.40
Seneca	2.14	2.39	1.80
Walhalla	2.59	2.11	3.18
Westminster	2.43	2.33	2.57
West Union	2.38	2.20	2.72
South Carolina	2.55	2.57	2.53

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

The Census defines a householder as the person in whose name a housing unit is owned or rented. Adults aged 65 or older are the householder for nearly one-third of all housing units (10,109 units) in the County, higher than the State percentage of 25.7% (Table 3-12). More than 32% of householders in the County are between the ages of 35 to 54 years, which is lower than the statewide percentage of 36%. Adults aged 55 to 64 comprise nearly 21% of all County householders.

Table 3-12. Age of Householder by Tenure, 2016

Householder Age by Tenure	Oconee County		South Carolina	
	#	%	#	%
Total All Occupied Units	30,867	100.0%	1,839,041	100.0%
15 to 24 years	992	3.2%	73,587	4.0%
25 to 34 years	3,466	11.2%	266,719	14.5%
35 to 54 years	9,915	32.1%	662,525	36.0%
55 to 64 years	6,385	20.7%	362,732	19.7%
65+ years	10,109	32.8%	473,478	25.7%
Owner Occupied Units	22,517	72.9%	1,258,661	68.4%
15 to 24 years	132	0.6%	11,082	0.9%
25 to 34 years	1,475	6.6%	112,052	8.9%
35 to 54 years	6,533	29.0%	446,398	35.5%
55 to 64 years	5,371	23.9%	287,278	22.8%
65+ years	9,006	40.0%	401,851	31.9%
Renter Occupied Units	8,350	27.1%	580,380	31.6%
15 to 24 years	860	10.3%	62,505	10.8%
25 to 34 years	1,991	23.8%	154,667	26.6%
35 to 54 years	3,382	40.5%	216,127	37.2%
55 to 64 years	1,014	12.1%	75,454	13.0%
65+ years	1,103	13.2%	71,627	12.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS



Seniors aged 65 and older account for 40% of householders living in owner-occupied units, but only 13.2% in rental units. Householders aged 35 to 54 comprise the highest percentage of renters in the County at 40.5% and the second highest percentage of homeowners at 29%.

As detailed in Table 3-13, more than 90% of Oconee County householders are White, 6.7% are Black, and 2.9% are of other races. Persons of Hispanic or Latino descent comprise 3.5% of all householders in the County, similar to the statewide percentage of 3.6%. The City of Seneca is the most racially diverse with regard to householders among the County's municipalities with 69.6% White, 26% African-American, and 4.4% of other races. The small Town of West Union has the highest percentage of Hispanic householders at 21.9%, followed closely by the City of Walhalla at 21%.

Table 3-13. Race of Householder, 2016

Jurisdiction	Total Occupied Units	Householder Race						Hispanic*	
		White		African-American		Other			
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Oconee County	30,867	27,910	90.4%	2,057	6.7%	900	2.9%	1,088	3.5%
Salem	64	64	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Seneca	3,826	2,662	69.6%	996	26.0%	168	4.4%	182	4.8%
Walhalla	1,594	1,299	81.5%	128	8.0%	167	10.5%	334	21.0%
Westminster	1,021	931	91.2%	68	6.7%	22	2.2%	6	0.6%
West Union	128	107	83.6%	3	2.3%	18	14.1%	28	21.9%
South Carolina	1,839,041	1,294,880	70.4%	477,479	26.0%	66,682	3.6%	67,116	3.6%

* Hispanic is an ethnic category in the Census, therefore persons of Hispanic Origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

G. HOUSING COSTS AND VALUE

Quality housing that meets diverse economic and social needs is essential to achieving a balanced and sustainable housing mix within a community. Housing affordability is a leading factor in the decision to locate in a community, it is equally important to have a variety of housing types from which to choose. The residential *trickle-down* effect – the process of residents buying or moving into more expensive housing when their financial situations allow and subsequently freeing less expensive housing for persons with lower incomes – only works when there is an adequate range of homes available. Conversely, older residents are often looking to “downsize” by moving into housing that is smaller, requires less maintenance, and is generally less expensive than their previous home.

The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Oconee County in 2016 was \$151,100 – \$7,500 more than the statewide median value of \$143,600 (Table 3-14). The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Oconee County ranked 11th highest out of the State's 46 counties. This median value was higher than Pickens County (\$124,000) and similar to Anderson County at \$151,100. Median housing values among the County's municipalities range from a high of \$139,500 in Seneca to a low of \$75,000 in Salem – a stark difference of \$64,500.



Gross rent is defined as the contract rent plus the estimated average monthly cost of utilities (electricity, gas, water and sewer) and fuels (oil, coal, kerosene, and wood) if these costs are paid by the renter or paid for the renter by another party. Median monthly gross rent in Oconee County at \$698 is significantly lower than the State median of \$811 (Table 3-14). Median gross rents varied among the municipalities in 2016, from \$544 in Seneca to \$636 in West Union. Median gross rent was not available for the Town of Salem in the 2012-2016 ACS.

Table 3-14. Median Value and Gross Rent of Occupied Housing Units (HU), 2016

Jurisdiction	Owner-Occupied HU		Renter-Occupied HU	
	Median Year Built	Median Value	Median Year Built	Median Monthly Gross Rent
Oconee County	1988	\$151,100	1984	\$698
Salem	1981	\$75,000	1967	---*
Seneca	1976	\$139,500	1978	\$544
Walhalla	1966	\$103,400	1975	\$590
Westminster	1959	\$107,500	1973	\$596
West Union	1973	\$104,700	1985	\$636
South Carolina	1988	\$143,600	1984	\$811

* Data not available

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

The housing value data for owner-occupied homes included in Table 3-15 reveals higher percentages of more expensive homes from \$300,000 and up, but lower percentages of homes in the low and moderate cost range between \$50,000 and \$299,999. However, Oconee has a larger percentage of homes in the lowest value range of less than \$50,000. More than a quarter of homes are valued between \$200,000 and \$499,999. Among owner-occupied homes, 2,090 (9.3%) are valued at more than \$500,000 and, of these, 396 are valued at \$1 million or more.

Table 3-15. Housing Values - Owner-occupied Housing Units, 2016

Housing Unit Value	Oconee County Housing Units		South Carolina Housing Units	
	#	%	#	%
Total Units	22,517	100.0%	1,258,661	100.0%
Less than \$50,000	3,508	15.6%	171,287	13.6%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	4,200	18.7%	246,394	19.6%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	3,452	15.3%	241,450	19.2%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	3,387	15.0%	203,983	16.2%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	2,992	13.3%	196,467	15.6%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	2,888	12.8%	128,952	10.2%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	1,694	7.5%	55,037	4.4%
\$1,000,000 or more	396	1.8%	15,091	1.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS



3-16). Sales prices decreased annually from 2010 through 2012 to a median low of \$143,750 before steadying and rising to a median high of \$179,500 through November 2018. The difference between annual median listed price and annual median sale price for residential units reached a 10-year high of almost 23% in 2018, with the median list price exceeding the actual median sale price by \$53,400. While this gap fluctuated throughout the decade, the lowest percentage difference between average list price and average sold price was -7.3% in 2010 – the only year that median sale price exceeded list price during the ten-year period.

**Table 3-16. Residential Housing Units - MLS Listings Summary
Oconee County, 2009 to 2018***

Year	Units Listed	Units Sold	Median Price		
			Listed	Sold	% Difference
2009	3,515	591	\$168,425	\$149,575	11.2%
2010	3,867	595	\$144,125	\$154,700	-7.3%
2011	4,170	606	\$176,400	\$144,750	17.9%
2012	4,775	680	\$159,975	\$143,750	10.1%
2013	5,660	746	\$183,500	\$159,003	13.3%
2014	10,371	839	\$184,250	\$159,503	13.4%
2015	13,378	999	\$189,000	\$159,000	15.9%
2016	11,985	1,266	\$192,200	\$162,000	15.7%
2017	10,196	1,331	\$198,950	\$170,775	14.2%
2018*	7,278	1,249	\$232,900	\$179,500	22.9%
Total	75,195	8,902	\$183,875	\$159,002	13.5%

* Data through November 2018

Source: Western Upstate S.C. Consolidated Multiple Listing Service, November 2018

Table 3-17 provides a more detailed examination of rental costs in Oconee County. Compared to renters statewide, Oconee residents generally pay lower monthly rents. A fifth of County renters pay less than \$500 a month, as compared to less than 13% of renters statewide. Only 17.5% of County renters live in more expensive rental housing of more than \$1,000 a month – significantly lower than the 25.8% of renters statewide.

Table 3-17. Monthly Gross Rent for Renter-occupied Housing Units, 2016

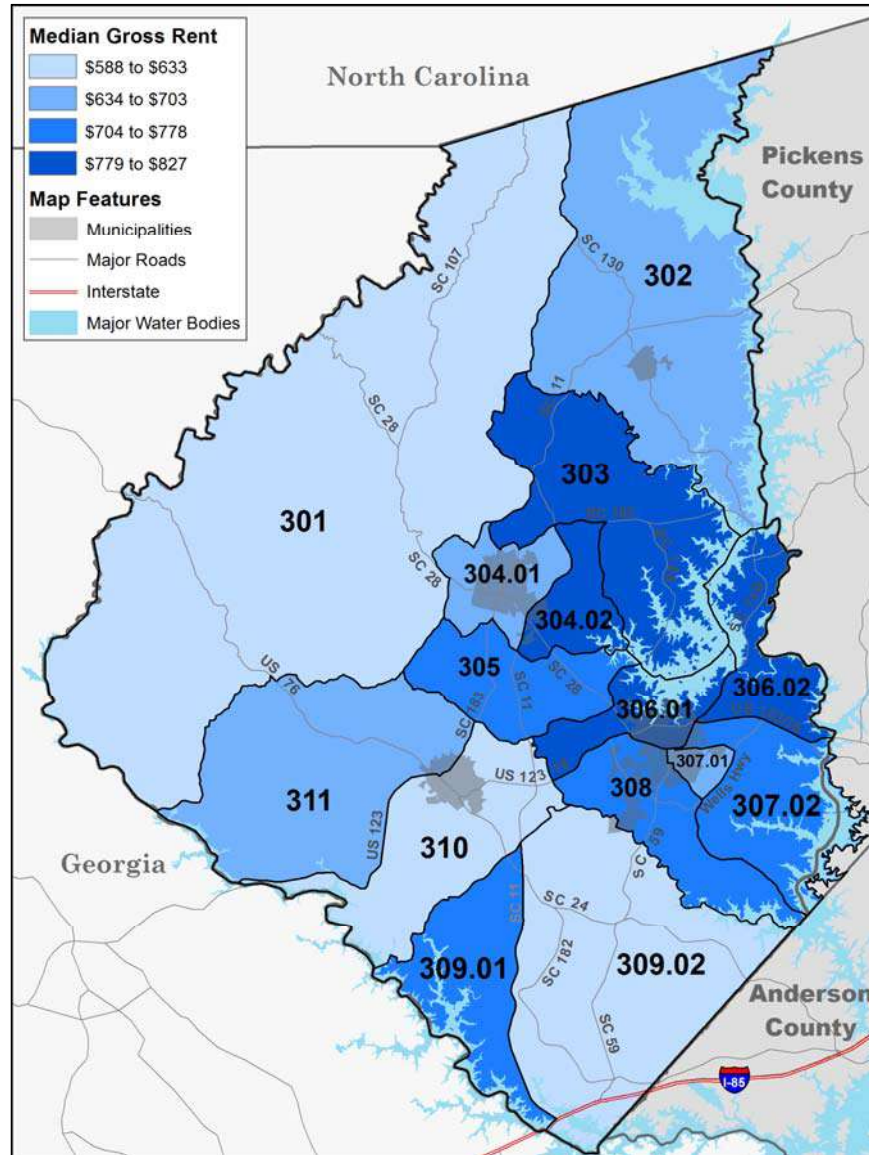
Monthly Gross Rent	City of Seneca		City of Walhalla		City of Westminster		Oconee County		South Carolina	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Units Paying Rent	1,644	100.0%	713	100.0%	430	100.0%	8,350	100.0%	580,380	100.0%
< \$200	55	3.3%	0	0.0%	5	1.2%	78	0.9%	8,196	1.4%
\$200 to \$299	235	14.3%	73	10.2%	16	3.7%	420	5.0%	17,576	3.0%
\$300 to \$499	349	21.2%	163	22.9%	79	18.4%	1,185	14.2%	48,549	8.4%
\$500 to \$749	366	22.3%	269	37.7%	138	32.1%	2,561	30.7%	148,665	25.6%
\$750 to \$999	266	16.2%	28	3.9%	78	18.1%	1,507	18.0%	154,484	26.6%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	239	14.5%	51	7.2%	35	8.1%	942	11.3%	112,639	19.4%
\$1,500 or more	54	3.3%	56	7.9%	0	0.0%	523	6.3%	37,014	6.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS



As shown in Map 3-6, tracts with the highest gross rents in Oconee County border Lake Keowee – 306.02 (\$827), 304.02 (\$810), 303 (\$783), and 306.01 (\$778). Tracts with the lowest gross rents include 309.02 (\$588) in the southernmost area of the County and bordered by Anderson County, 310 (\$613) that includes most of the Town of Westminster, and 301 (\$614) in the western area of the County that borders Georgia and North Carolina.

Map 3-6. Median Gross Rent by Census Tract, 2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

H. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Affordability is a key factor in the housing market. The cost of housing must be in sync with local household incomes if a community is to meet future housing needs. Lending institutions



generally base affordability on housing costs not exceeding 2.5 times the gross household income. This translates to about 30% of household income available for gross housing expenses. HUD defines gross housing expenses to include utilities for renters and mortgage payments, utilities, taxes, and insurance for homeowners. Under HUD criteria, a housing unit is considered *affordable* if its gross cost does not exceed 30% of the occupant's income. Conversely, a household is considered *cost-burdened* if its occupants are paying more than 30% of their income for housing costs.

Census data is useful in developing a picture of housing affordability in Oconee County. Median homeowner costs (for homeowners with a mortgage) comprise only 21.1% of household income in Oconee County – well within the definition of affordable housing and slightly lower than the statewide percentage of 21.3% (Table 3-18). Homeowners without a mortgage spend only 10% of their household income on housing costs. Median costs for homeowners in the County's municipalities are also well below 30%.

Cost burden is more prevalent among the County's renters than homeowners. Median gross rent comprises 31.5% of household income countywide, as compared to 30.5% statewide. Median gross rent exceeds 30% of household income in all of the County's municipalities, with renters paying nearly 36% of their incomes for rent and utilities in Westminster.

Table 3-18. Owner and Renter Costs as a Percentage of Household Income, 2016

Jurisdiction	Median Selected Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income				Median Gross Rent as Percentage of Household Income	
	With a Mortgage		Without a Mortgage		\$	%
	\$	%	\$	%		
Oconee County	\$1,141	21.1%	\$324	10.1%	\$698	31.5%
Salem	\$840	16.3%	\$340	11.7%	-*	-*
Seneca	\$1,063	20.9%	\$382	10.8%	\$544	30.8%
Walhalla	\$983	21.7%	\$312	13.0%	\$590	31.3%
Westminster	\$1,033	23.8%	\$330	14.0%	\$596	35.8%
West Union	\$739	23.8%	\$253	13.8%	\$636	30.0%
South Carolina	\$1,185	21.3%	\$349	10.7%	\$811	30.5%

* Data not available

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

Additional data on housing costs as a percentage of household income provide insight into housing affordability conditions. Among County homeowners, 4,345 (19.3% of all housing units) live in homes that cost more than they can comfortably afford, slightly lower than the percentage statewide at 21.9% (Table 3-19). Nearly one-third (30%) of County homeowners (3,294 housing units) pay mortgages and associated housing costs totaling 30% or more of their income, slightly higher than the State percentage of 28.6%. Among County homeowners without a mortgage, only 9.3% (1,051 housing units) are cost-burdened. Nearly half (44.7%) of County renters (3,732 households) are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on rent and utilities, similar to the statewide percentage of 44.9%.



However, of greater concern are the 1,904 homeowners (8.5% of all homeowners) and 1,975 renters (23.7% of all renters) in Oconee County who spend more than half of their household incomes on housing costs (2012-2016 ACS). A significant percentage of County residents are paying more than they can afford for housing and, of these, many are paying considerably more than they can afford. Households with such significant cost burdens must sometimes delay purchase of essential needs such as food, health care and medications to remain in their homes – a problem that has been exacerbated in recent years by rising prices on basic necessities such as health care and food.

Table 3-19. Housing Units Paying more than 30% of Household Income for Selected Monthly Homeowner Costs or Gross Rent, 2016

Jurisdiction	Selected Monthly Costs - Owners						Gross Rent - Renters	
	All Housing Units		With a Mortgage		Without a Mortgage		#	% of All HU
	#	% of All HU	#	% of All HU	#	% of All HU		
Oconee County	4,345	19.3%	3,294	29.5%	1,051	9.3%	3,732	44.7%
Salem	5	9.3%	5	19.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Seneca	453	20.8%	421	32.7%	32	3.6%	783	47.6%
Walhalla	209	23.7%	136	34.3%	73	15.1%	331	46.4%
Westminster	177	29.9%	129	40.6%	48	17.6%	182	42.3%
West Union	18	22.0%	6	19.4%	12	23.5%	22	47.8%
South Carolina	275,773	21.9%	214,241	28.6%	61,532	12.1%	260,825	44.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 ACS

Local agency and community representatives indicate that it is difficult for young families, professionals, and other individuals who would like to live and work in Oconee County to find homes in moderate price ranges that are also safe and in good condition. While the County has a comparatively high vacancy rate of 21%, with most vacant units found in the unincorporated area, the reason for some of the vacancies is the poor condition of the housing units. Location can also be a factor, with housing near employment centers, major transportation routes, and the services and resources available in the more urbanized eastern area of the County in higher demand and therefore in short supply. The steeper topography found in some areas of the County can also result in increased residential construction costs.

Oconee County residents would also benefit from housing options that allow them to remain in the community throughout the various stages of life – a concept known as “aging in place.” This concept requires housing that accommodates a variety of ages, prices, and life styles. Young families need affordable options near schools, employment centers, recreation, and activities. College students and young professionals generally prefer higher density housing options with amenities, in proximity to employment, recreation, and entertainment. Older residents need housing options that can accommodate limited mobility and are near essential healthcare services and transportation, with an option to transition to nearby assisted living or nursing care



if needed. Most residents want housing with convenient access to essential services such as grocery stores and shopping.

I. PUBLIC AND ASSISTED HOUSING PROGRAMS

Not all Oconee County residents have the means to afford market housing prices or rents. Several programs are in place to assist these individuals in obtaining adequate, safe and affordable housing.

1. Public Housing

The South Carolina Regional Housing Authority for Region One (SCRHA No. 1) provides general administration and oversight for eight public housing developments in Oconee County through its Seneca office. These complexes are located within three of the County's cities and provide a total of 228 housing units for qualifying residents (Table 3-21).

Table 3-21. Public Housing Complexes, 2018

Complex Name	Number of Housing Units
City of Seneca	
North Hunter St./East South Second St.	22
South Stribling St.	14
North Hunter St. (for elderly/disabled residents)	40
Tribble St.	60
City of Walhalla	
Wagener Circle	50
Moore/Todd Apartments	10
City of Westminster	
Highland Ave. Apartments	22
South Spring St.	10
Total Public Housing Units	228

Source: S.C. Regional Housing Authority No. 1, November 2018

2. Housing Choice Voucher Program

South Carolina Regional Housing Authority No. 1 administers the *Housing Choice Voucher Program* (formerly known as the *Section 8 Rental Assistance Program*) for Oconee County. *Housing Choice* provides subsidies for privately-owned housing for eligible applicants. Eligibility is based primarily on income as established by HUD and adjusted annually. Housing Choice Vouchers can be used to obtain housing in an assisted housing development (*project-based*) or to subsidize rent for a home or apartment on the private rental market (*tenant-based*). Voucher allocations are made on a regional basis and distributed by SCRHA No. 1 to applicants throughout its nine-county region on a case-by-case basis.

As of December 2018, there were an estimated 100 to 120 Housing Choice Vouchers in use for housing assistance by Oconee County families. There are 72 Oconee County families on the waiting list for housing vouchers. SCRHA No. 1 staff report that 25 families with vouchers have been unable to find housing developments that accept vouchers in Oconee County. While some apartment complexes have historically accepted vouchers, several owners have paid off their mortgages, removing low and moderate-income rental requirements. Many of the complexes that formerly housed County residents with vouchers are now home to Clemson students who are seeking affordable housing options near the campus and are willing to pay higher rents than are possible from housing voucher holders.

3. Assisted Housing

In addition to public housing developments, there are 19 assisted multi-family housing developments in Oconee County, supported by various types of subsidies (Table 3-21). An estimated 824 multi-family housing units are occupied by residents who receive some form of financial assistance. The rent for most of these units is set at a price that is affordable to low income households. Assistance varies from project to project, as well as family to family, and includes:

- Housing Choice (Section 8) Voucher rent subsidies for low and very low-income households;
- Financing incentives to developers for building multi-family rental units for low and moderate income families; and
- The provision of tax credits to developers of multi-family rental units who provide affordable housing for low-income families in 20% or more of their units.

Among assisted rental units, 99 of the units housing persons receiving financial assistance are specifically allocated to elderly residents and 12 units provide supportive housing for persons with disabilities.

Table 3-21. Inventory of Assisted Rental Housing for Oconee County, 2018*¹

Project and Location	Assistance Type	Total Units	Assisted Units	Family Units		Elderly Units	
				#	% of Assisted	#	% of Assisted
Applewood Villas W. S. Fourth St., Seneca	Community Investment Corp. of the Carolinas	50	50	50	100.0%	0	0.0%
Autumnwood Village Apts. Autumnwood Ln., Walhalla	LIHTC	32	32	32	100.0%	0	0.0%
Country Ridge Apts. Pine Manor Cir., Walhalla	LIHTC	32	19	19	100.0%	0	0.0%
Fair Oaks Village Fair Oaks Cir., Seneca	Section 515 Rural Rental Housing	64	63	63	100.0%	0	0.0%
Greenfield Apts. Fairfield Dr., Seneca	Section 8 Project-Based	52	40	40	100.0%	0	0.0%
Highland Glen Apts. Highland Glen Ct, Walhalla	LIHTC	64	64	64	100.0%	0	0.0%
Laurel Estates Autumnwood Lane, Walhalla	USDA	20	15	0	0.0%	15	100.0%
Mountain Trace Hillsborough Dr., Seneca	Section 8 Project-Based	56	56	56	100.0%	0	0.0%
New Walhalla I Apts. Walhalla Gardens Cir., Walhalla	Section 8 Project-Based	36	36	36	100.0%	0	0.0%
North Woods Apts. Northwood Dr., Seneca	LIHTC	119	119	119	100.0%	0	0.0%
Seneca Gardens Apts. Laing Ct., Seneca	Section 8 Project-Based, LIHTC	77	77	77	100.0%	0	0.0%
Sloan Street Phase I Seniors Way, Seneca	Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly	16	16	0	0.0%	16	100.0%
Sloan Street Phase II Sloan & Sherard Sts., Seneca	Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly	20	20	0	0.0%	20	100.0%
Springbrook Apts. Dalton Rd., Seneca	LIHTC, Section 521 USDA Rental Assistance	45	15	15	100.0%	0	0.0%
Spring Valley Elderly Housing Field Village Dr., Seneca	Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly	48	48	0	0.0%	48	100.0%
Standpoint Vista Apts. Mangers Ct., Walhalla	Section 8 Project-Based	64	64	64	100.0%	0	0.0%
Stribling Place² N. Stribling St., Seneca	Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities	12	12	12	100.0%	0	0.0%
Walhalla Gardens II Apts. 100 Walhalla Gardens Cir., Walhalla	Section 8 Project-Based	36	35	35	100.0%	0	0.0%
Westminster East Apts. Sunshine Cir., Westminster	USDA	50	44	44	100.0%	0	0.0%
Total		892	824	725	88.0%	99	13.7%

¹Table may not include a complete listing of existing facilities

² Provides assisted housing for persons with disabilities

Sources: U.S. HUD LIHTC Database, Nov. 2018; USDA Rural Development Multi-family Housing Rentals, Nov. 2018; Affordable Housing Online, Nov. 2018



4. State Housing Authority Programs

Several housing ownership and housing development programs are provided through the South Carolina State Housing Finance and Development Authority (SCSHFDA) and its partners. These programs are detailed in the following sections.

The SCSHFDA has *Housing Ownership Loan Programs* that assist individuals in purchasing a home. These options offer interest rates based upon income and the specific county in which the applicant will purchase their home. The programs are offered to “*First-Time Homebuyers*” – defined as individuals who have not owned a home within the three years prior to the closing of their new loan. However, if a family includes at least one permanently disabled or handicapped individual, or if the homebuyer is a single parent or a veteran, the family is considered a first-time buyer as long as the family does not own a principal residence at the time of closing. Applicants must have an acceptable credit history to qualify. Eligible properties include new and existing stick-built single-family homes, townhomes, condominiums, and new off-frame modular and manufactured housing that meet minimum Federal Housing Administration (FHA) building standards. The SCSFHDA also offers options of up to \$5,000 for down payment and closing cost assistance for borrowers.

The *South Carolina Housing Trust Fund* provides funding for the development, rehabilitation, and acquisition of affordable housing for low-income and very low-income households statewide. Proceeds from the documentary stamp tax – an increase of twenty cents per \$500 on real estate sold – are earmarked for the Fund. Rather than making funding awards directly to individuals, the Trust Fund supports a network of partners, including governmental and non-profit entities, for the provision of affordable housing to eligible citizens in specified funding categories that include: emergency repair; acquisition, rehabilitation, and construction of group homes and supportive housing for the homeless; homeownership down payment and closing cost assistance for LMI residents; housing rehabilitation for very low-income homeowners; and acquisition, rehabilitation, and construction of affordable rental housing for low or very low-income persons.

The *Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC)* is designed to provide an incentive for development of multi-family rental housing. Developments that may qualify for credits include new construction, acquisition with rehabilitation, and rehabilitation and adaptive reuse. Owners of and investors in qualifying developments can use the credit as a dollar-for-dollar reduction of federal income tax liability. Allocations of credits are used to leverage public, private, and other funds to keep rents affordable. A development must have at least 20% of its units occupied by households earning at or below 50% of the area median income, or 40% of its units occupied by households earning at or below 60% of the area median income to be eligible for tax credits. Income limits are adjusted based on household size. Maximum rents are set for each unit size based on 30% of the maximum allowable income for specified household size in the area. Utilities paid by the tenant are counted as part of the maximum rent.



5. USDA Rural Development Housing Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers several housing programs in the rural areas of Oconee County through the Rural Development program. Rural housing is a major component of the Rural Development mission with a commitment to assisting families and individuals in South Carolina with their need for decent, safe, sanitary, and affordable housing. Single-Family Housing (SFH) programs administered by the USDA offer homeownership and home improvement loans and grants for individuals and families in rural areas. Multi-Family Housing (MFH) programs include Rural Rental Housing (RRH), Direct and Guaranteed Rural Rental Housing (GRRH) Loans, Rental Assistance, Farm Labor Housing (LH) Loans and Grants, and Housing Preservation Grants (HPG).

6. Veterans Administration

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) guarantees home loans to veterans for site-built and manufactured housing through the South Carolina VA office. *Home Loans* are made by private lenders and can be used for the purchase or construction of a home, home repair or improvement, or home refinancing. *Manufactured Home Loans* are also made by private lenders and can be used for the purchase of a manufactured home and associated lot, to make repairs to a home or property already owned, or to refinance a manufactured home. Modular homes cannot be purchased through this program. For both loan programs, the home must be the primary place of residence for the veteran. Veterans applying for loans using these programs must obtain a *Certificate of Eligibility* from the VA, must have enough income to pay the mortgage payments and other associated costs of owning a home, and must have a good credit record. In some cases, the spouse of a veteran may also be able to obtain a loan.

7. Oconee County Habitat for Humanity

Oconee County Habitat for Humanity (OCHFH) is a locally run affiliate of *Habitat for Humanity International* – a nonprofit, ecumenical Christian housing organization that seeks to eliminate substandard housing and homelessness and to make adequate, affordable shelter a matter of conscience and action. Through volunteer labor and donations of money and materials, Habitat builds and rehabilitates houses with the help of the homeowner families who are viewed as partners in the process.

Since 1986, OCHFH has provided energy efficient, affordable housing in partnership with 100 families with a goal of constructing four to five houses per year to meet the increased need for decent affordable housing in the County. Each Habitat home costs approximately \$80,000 and includes three to four bedrooms, two bathrooms, and kitchen, living, and dining areas. OCHFH's team of 200 volunteers work closely with prospective homeowners to provide the construction labor, aided by donations and volunteer assistance from local businesses and organizations as well as grants from national organizations such as Community Bank, Bank of America, and Wells Fargo.



Prospective owners must have lived in Oconee County for one year or more, have a verifiable steady household income that is within 35% to 70% of the local area median income, and be able to make an \$800 down payment. The applicant's current housing must be substandard or inadequate to accommodate the family size. Habitat homes are sold to qualified partner families at no profit through affordable, zero-interest loans. Partner families repay the cost of housing materials, sub-contracts and land over a 20 to 30-year period through monthly mortgage payments that are in turn used to finance the construction of more Habitat homes. Applicants must also be willing to invest 250 hours of volunteer "sweat equity" into building their Habitat house or provide other hands-on physical assistance needed for Habitat endeavors such as building other homes or working at OCHFH's Restore. Approved applicants are expected to pay their mortgage on time and attend programs to learn and practice budgeting, home repair and maintenance.

J. AFFORDABLE HOUSING OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The *South Carolina Priority Investment Act of 2007* requires local governments to analyze regulatory requirements that act as barriers to affordable housing and to analyze the use of market-based incentives that may be offered to encourage the development of affordable housing. The Act defines affordable housing as:

"...in the case of dwelling units for sale, housing in which mortgage, amortization, taxes, insurance, and condominium or associations fees, if any, constitute no more than 28% of the annual household income for a household earning no more than 80% of the area median income, by household size, for the metropolitan statistical area as published from time to time by the U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development and, in the case of dwelling units for rent, housing for which the rent and utilities constitute not more than 30% of the area median income, by household size, for the metropolitan statistical area."

Oconee County's regulatory requirements and procedures are very conducive to the development of affordable housing. This is evidenced by the availability of water and sewer infrastructure in more populated areas, housing costs, and in particular the lack of regulatory barriers to manufactured housing and the development of affordable multi-family housing.

Multi-family housing is allowed in all zoning districts countywide. Most of the multi-family housing developments in the County are located within or near the cities of Seneca and Walhalla and along the U.S. Highway 123 corridor that links Seneca and Clemson. A number of the County's multi-family complexes were built under Federal programs that require the provision of housing units that are affordable to persons of low and moderate incomes. Several State and Federal programs provide housing assistance to County residents, as well as financial assistance and incentives to developers of affordable housing. These programs are detailed in *Section H – Public and Assisted Housing Programs*.

Manufactured homes, widely considered a viable affordable housing option, comprised more than one-fifth of all housing units in the County in 2016 (Table 3-7). Nearly one-quarter of all permits for single-family homes (130 permits) in Oconee County were issued for manufactured homes in 2017 and 123 were issued through November of 2018 (Table 3-4). Manufactured homes are currently allowed in all zoning districts in the Oconee County, as are manufactured home parks.

American Community Survey data reveals that the median costs for homeowners with a mortgage are only 21.1% of household income in Oconee County – well within the definition of affordable housing and compatible with median costs statewide (Table 3-18). One-third of owner-occupied homes in the County are valued at less than \$100,000 (Table 3-15). However, median value for County housing units at \$151,100 is \$7,500 above the statewide median value (Table 3-14).

While the disparity between housing cost and income poses a potential barrier to affordable housing for a segment of renters in the County, housing remains within reach for many renters. Although the County median gross rent comprises 31.5% of household income, it is only slightly above the State median of 30.5% and the cost-burden threshold of 30% (Table 3-18). The median monthly gross rent of \$698 paid by Oconee County renters is much lower than the statewide median of \$811 (Table 3-14). More than 20% of County renters pay less than \$500 per month for rent and associated costs (Table 3-17).

The availability of water and sewer service can reduce initial residential construction and development costs and enable smaller residential lot sizes in appropriate areas. In turn, these conditions can make residential development more attractive to prospective developers and less expensive for potential buyers. Wells and septic tanks can be less expensive alternatives to publicly provided water and sewer service over time. However, the expense of installing wells and septic tanks can drive up initial development costs for homebuyers. Septic tank requirements also require larger lot sizes that can sometimes raise land prices higher than the smaller lots in more densely developed projects that have water and sewer service. The extension of public sewer service to currently unserved areas can lower residential development costs. Increased availability of water and sewer service can also encourage the location of new industries and businesses that provide additional jobs and increased community investment.

While water service is available in many areas of Oconee County, sewer service is limited. Ten water providers serve the more populated southwestern area of the County that includes the greater areas of Walhalla, Westminster, and Salem. Sewer service is available within the cities of Seneca, Walhalla and Westminster as well as limited surrounding areas; and along several major transportation corridors including S.C. Highways 130, 59, and 11 and U.S. Highway 123/76.

Additional opportunities to address the issue of housing affordability in Oconee County include efforts to raise the incomes of County residents. Ongoing economic and workforce development efforts that focus on raising the earnings potential of residents so that they can afford available



local housing are key. These efforts include continuing to recruit businesses and industries that offer higher paying employment with increased advancement opportunities, combined with providing advanced training to prepare Oconee County residents to fill and retain these jobs.

K. HOUSING FOR SPECIAL NEEDS POPULATIONS

Special needs populations – the elderly, persons with disabilities, persons with chronic illnesses, individuals and families in crisis, and the homeless – often have special housing needs. These specialized housing needs can be met in the form of nursing homes, assisted living facilities, emergency and crisis shelters, halfway houses and group quarters, and temporary homeless shelters.

1. Senior Citizens and Persons with Disabilities

One-in-five Oconee County residents (15,350 persons) have some form of disability, including hearing or vision impairment, cognitive difficulty, ambulatory limitation, or other condition that impedes their ability to care for themselves. Of these disabled residents, 20.3% are children under 18 years of age, 18.9% are 18 to 34 years of age, and more than one-third (39.3%) are between the ages of 35 and 64. While most of the County's disabled residents live at home, some require specialized support services in a residential setting.

More than one-fifth (21.5%) of Oconee County residents (16,092 persons) are aged 65 or older. As the population of the County ages and older residents seek alternative housing options, the availability of appropriate housing for seniors becomes increasingly important. According to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey, over one-third (38.5%) of Oconee County residents aged 65 and older (6,203 persons) are disabled.

There are several types of housing available for the elderly and persons with disabilities, representing a range of assistance and care options in the County.

Nursing homes are facilities that provide nursing or convalescent care for two or more persons unrelated to the licensee. A nursing home provides long-term care of chronic conditions or short-term convalescent or rehabilitative care of remedial ailments for which medical and nursing care are necessary. The Division of Health Licensing of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) lists two facilities in Oconee County, providing space for up to 252 residents (Table 3-22). Both of the County's nursing homes are located within the City of Seneca.

Community Residential Care Facilities, also referred to as *Assisted Living Facilities*, offer room and board for two or more persons unrelated to the licensee. These facilities are designed to accommodate changing needs and preferences of residents; maximize the dignity, autonomy, privacy, independence, and safety of residents; and encourage family and community involvement. There are six assisted living facilities in Oconee County, providing a total of 380

housing units (Table 3-22). Five of the licensed facilities are located in City of Seneca and one is in the Town of West Union.

Table 3-22. Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities in Oconee County, 2018*

Facility Name	Address	Total
Nursing Homes		
Lila Doyle at Oconee Medical Center	101 Lila Doyle Dr., Seneca	120
Seneca Health and Rehabilitation Center	140 Tokeena Rd., Seneca	132
Total in Oconee County	2 Facilities	252 beds
Community Residential Care (Assisted Living) Facilities		
Belvedere Commons of Seneca	515 Benton St., Seneca	62
Foothills Assisted Living	999 W. Union Rd., West Union	76
Keowee Place	475 Rochester Hwy., Seneca	50
Morningside of Seneca	15855 Wells Hwy., Seneca	59
Residences at Park Place	115 Gillespie Rd., Seneca	100
Seneca Residential Care Center	126 Tokeena Rd., Seneca	33
Total in Oconee County	6 Facilities	380 units

*Table may not include a complete listing of existing facilities

Source: SC DHEC, Division of Health Licensing, Licensed Facilities by Type, November 2018

Housing options are also available in Oconee County for persons with disabilities and special needs (mental retardation, autism, or related disability) as diagnosed by the S.C. Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (SCDSN). *The Tribble Center* was established in 1975 by the Oconee County Disabilities and Special Needs Board in Seneca to provide support and services to meet the needs of those who have developmental or intellectual disabilities, spinal cord and head injuries, and autism and their families in Oconee County. Services include case management, early intervention, adult day programs, residential services, and other support services. The Center offers residential services through Community Training Homes and Supervised Living Programs. The Tribble Center operates 13 *Community Training Homes*, located throughout Oconee County. The Homes offer individuals the opportunity to live in a home-like setting with staff supervision 24-hours a day and include training to increase independence, administration of medications, and community activities. *Supervised Living Programs* offer individuals with the ability to live semi-independently to do so. Residents live in apartments or private dwellings and are provided supervision and assistance tailored to their specific needs.

The *Stribling Place* apartment complex in Seneca was built with funding provided by HUD's Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities Program. The Program is intended to increase the number of properties that can accommodate very low-income persons with special needs, including those with a mental illness. Stribling Place provides 12 one-bedroom apartments for qualified applicants.

2. Homeless Population and Victims of Domestic Violence

United Housing Connections reported that there were 54 individuals were counted as homeless in Oconee County in January 2018. Of these, 16 persons were unsheltered and 38 were housed in emergency shelters or temporary housing. While families or individuals who are doubling up with friends or relatives because they have no other housing options are not included in the HUD definition of homeless individuals and families, they are often at risk of losing that temporary shelter and becoming homeless. Doubling up is considered a temporary situation, one that is often prohibited by public housing laws and landlords. If the extra household residents are discovered, both families face possible eviction. Moreover, doubled-up friends or families often impose space and financial burdens on the host family and the guests are often asked to leave after a short time. In smaller and more rural communities with no public shelters, doubling up is often the stop-gap measure before sleeping on the streets.

Because of the limited resources available and the more suburban/rural nature of Oconee County, it is assumed that many homeless persons in the County double up with friends or family or gravitate to the more structured services provided in neighboring areas such as Anderson and Greenville. As a result, many have likely not been included in recent homeless counts. Although methodologies exist to count the homeless who take advantage of services offered by various agencies and organizations, it is a challenge to get an accurate picture of the true extent of homelessness in the County. In addition, based on cost-burden and overcrowding data, it is clear that there are precariously housed families and individuals in Oconee County who are at risk for homelessness. Many of these households may be only one rent payment or unexpected expense away from housing loss.

Several agencies and organizations provide shelter and housing assistance for homeless individuals and families in Oconee County. *Our Daily Rest* on E. Main Street in Seneca provides shelter for homeless men, women and their children. The program has served more than 1,600 clients in Oconee County since its inception in 2009 and helps residents to transition to successful independent living. Housing for 20 men is provided in a dormitory style setting, while housing for 15 women and their children includes individual rooms that house three or four persons per room. The shelter also includes a fenced outdoor recreation area, laundry facilities, a living area, and a snack area.

Christ Central Ministries in Walhalla is developing a pilot project that will transform the former Oconee County Detention Center on Short Street in Walhalla into a Resource and Solution Center in response for the countywide need for a homelessness solution. Plans include providing emergency shelter for homeless families and individuals, transitional housing, and classes on finance, addiction and recover, life skills, GED, and parenting.

Nearby faith-based *Family Promise of Pickens County* helps to meet the immediate needs of homeless families for shelter, meals and support services. The rotating congregations in the Network host up to four families of not more than 14 individuals, providing lodging and daily

meals. Families must undergo background checks and drug testing and must follow rules of conduct. Families typically stay in the program from one to three months.

Upstate Housing Connections offers an array of options for those in need of housing in their 13-county region that includes Oconee County. Programs include:

- Intake and referral,
- The provision of affordable housing including Stribling Place in Seneca,
- A rapid rehousing program to help families and individuals living on the streets or in emergency shelters obtain permanent housing,
- Permanent supportive housing for persons with very low incomes and chronic disabling health conditions,
- Transitional housing for homeless youth,
- Safe Havens for people experiencing chronic homelessness and with a serious mental illness, and
- Temporary emergency shelter for families in need at Trey's House in Anderson.

Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be sexual, emotional, economic, or physical actions or threats of actions that influence another person. Data from the office of the South Carolina Attorney General shows that more than 36,000 victims report a domestic violence incident to law enforcement annually statewide. The vast majority of victims of domestic violence are women and children. South Carolina ranks first in the nation for women killed by men (*"When Men Murder Women," Violence Policy Center, 2015*). It is estimated that one in four women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime (*SC Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault*).

Victims of domestic violence comprise a substantial portion of the homeless and near homeless population. Unfortunately, it is widely recognized that most cases of domestic violence go unreported, with far more families in turmoil than the data indicates. Approximately half of all homeless women report that domestic violence was directly responsible for their homelessness (*National Alliance to End Homeless, Homelessness and Domestic Violence: What's the Connection, 2015*).

Safe Harbor provides safe shelter, counseling, and advocacy for victims of domestic violence and their children. The Safe Harbor location in Seneca provides emergency shelter at their 16-bed facility. During their six to eight-week shelter stay, clients receive counseling, case management, referrals, advocacy, and basic living necessities. Transitional housing is also available to survivors of domestic violence and provides secure and stable housing through rental and utility assistance for approximately 18 months.

Although only three of the homeless persons in the 2018 PIT count were identified as veterans, it is likely that there are more who are living with relatives or friends or were otherwise uncounted. The *Oconee County Veteran's Affairs Office* advocates for veterans and assists in filing for benefits and monetary assistance to help pay for the cost of assisted living or nursing home, obtaining transportation to the Greenville VA Medical Center, and provides other referral services. While housing specifically for veterans is not available in Oconee County, the *United Veterans Association* provides an emergency shelter for homeless veterans in nearby Greenville. Homeless veterans may also apply for HUD's *Veterans Administration Supportive Housing Program* (HUD-VASH). HUD-VASH provides permanent housing for eligible homeless veterans who need case management services because of serious mental illness, substance use disorder history, or physical disability. Housing for an eligible veteran can also include their families.



L. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The goals, objectives and strategies for implementation (GOIS) table summarizes the actions that will be undertaken in the coming decade to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the Housing Element.

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Goal 3.1. Encourage a broad range of housing opportunities and a balance of housing types to meet the current and future needs of Oconee County residents.		
Objective 3.1.1. Promote the development of a diverse housing stock to meet the needs of residents and accommodate a variety of economic levels, occupations, age groups, and lifestyle preferences.		
<u>Strategy 3.1.1.1.</u> Encourage the development of a range of housing types and densities to include single-family, site-built homes; patio homes, multi-family developments, and manufactured homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Residential Developers 	2021
<u>Strategy 3.1.1.2.</u> Encourage housing development that will accommodate residents of all ages and stages of life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Residential Developers 	2025
<u>Strategy 3.1.1.3.</u> Review and amend land use plans and regulations, relevant policies, and proposed residential developments, to ensure compatibility between new residential developments and existing agricultural uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2021
<u>Strategy 3.1.1.4.</u> Review and amend land use plans and regulations to identify and remove possible barriers to the development of a variety of housing options and residential development types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2021
Objective 3.1.2. Encourage housing development that will enable residents to “age-in-place.”		
<u>Strategy 3.1.2.1.</u> Work with public and private agencies and organizations to assess the housing and associated needs of senior citizens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • ACOG • Oconee County Senior Center • Senior Solutions • Other Public and Private Organizations 	2023
<u>Strategy 3.1.2.2.</u> Encourage and promote housing development that will allow the County’s older residents to age in place such as higher density single-family and multi-family developments, assisted living, and nursing facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Assisted Living Providers • Residential Developers 	2023



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Goal 3.2. Promote and enhance access to affordable, safe, and decent housing for all Oconee residents through public and private cooperation.		
Objective 3.2.1. Encourage the provision of affordable, safe, and decent housing.		
Strategy 3.2.1.1. Encourage and promote programs that provide assistance and education on the responsibilities and requirements of homeownership to potential homeowners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDA Rural Development • Financial Institutions • Habitat for Humanity • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2025
Strategy 3.2.1.2. Encourage and promote the development of housing options that are affordable for low- and middle-income families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USDA Rural Development • Residential Developers • Habitat for Humanity • Community Non-profits • Oconee County • Municipalities 	Annually
Strategy 3.2.1.3. Encourage infill housing development on vacant properties in developed residential areas already served by infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Residential Developers 	2025
Strategy 3.2.1.4. Work with the State and other organizations to identify and secure funding for housing and neighborhood rehabilitation for declining and unsafe residential areas through the public, non-profit, and private sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Residential Developers 	2021
Strategy 3.2.1.5. Encourage affordable housing development in Opportunity Zones identified in Oconee County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • ACOG • Financial Institutions • Community Non-Profits • S.C. State Housing Finance and Development Authority • HUD • Municipalities 	2023
Strategy 3.2.1.6. Protect existing neighborhoods from incompatible uses that could reduce safety and lower property values through consistent enforcement of zoning and subdivision regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	Annually
Strategy 3.2.1.7. Promote and encourage development within defined Opportunity Zones featuring either mixed use or affordable housing elements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Financial Institutions • U.S. Senators from S.C. 	Annually



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Objective 3.2.2. Work with the State, municipalities, neighboring communities, and other public and private organizations to remove barriers to, and identify solutions for, the provision of affordable housing.		
<u>Strategy 3.2.2.1.</u> Encourage the expansion of water and sewer infrastructure and facilities to increase opportunities for new residential development and provide service for existing residential areas that are currently unserved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Water and Sewer Providers • S.C. Dept. of Commerce 	2023
<u>Strategy 3.2.2.2.</u> Work with local, State, and Federal agencies to identify and reduce or remove barriers to housing affordability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • State and Federal agencies 	2025
<u>Strategy 3.2.2.3.</u> Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions to address the provision of low- and moderate-income workforce housing on a regional scale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Neighboring Counties • ACOG 	2025
<u>Strategy 3.2.2.4.</u> Work with the State Housing Authority and other relevant agencies to assess the extent of the shortage of housing affordable for low and moderate-income residents in the County and identify potential possible solutions to alleviate the shortage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • State Housing Authority • Clemson University 	Annually
<u>Strategy 3.2.2.5.</u> Review and amend land use and development regulations and other relevant requirements and procedures to remove potential barriers and provide incentives for the provision of safe, decent, and affordable housing options for Oconee County families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	Annually
Goal 3.3. Provide appropriate housing and associated services, assistance, and access to resources for Oconee County residents with special needs.		
Objective 3.3.1. Assess and address the housing and associated needs of the County's special populations.		
<u>Strategy 3.3.1.1.</u> Support and encourage participation in the annual Point-in-Time Homeless count to determine the extent of homelessness in Oconee County in the effort to prevent and eliminate homelessness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • United Housing Connections • Local Service Providers 	Annually



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<p><u>Strategy 3.3.1.2.</u> Work with local agencies and service providers to explore options for providing short-term and permanent housing and associated services for homeless veterans in Oconee County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • United Housing Connections • Local Service Providers • Oconee County Veterans Affairs 	<p>2022</p>
<p><u>Strategy 3.3.1.3.</u> Encourage cooperation between agencies, non-profits, and private developers to meet the housing needs of other special populations such as individuals with alternative needs and victims of domestic violence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and Local Agencies • Residential Developers • Oconee County • Municipalities 	<p>Annually</p>



Chapter 4. Economic Element

The local economy affects every aspect of community life from jobs and taxes to environmental quality. A healthy economic climate offers increased income potential for Oconee County residents, a supportive environment for business and industry to succeed, and increased fiscal stability of local governments to maintain and expand community services and infrastructure. A balanced and diversified economy can also help Oconee County, its municipalities, and its residents and employers successfully weather economic downturns.

The Economic Element focuses on the components of the economy of Oconee County, its municipalities, and the surrounding Upstate region. It examines labor force characteristics, an analysis of income and wealth characteristics and distribution, commuting patterns, educational attainment and workforce development, occupational outlook, existing business and industry, market forces, realized and untapped economic assets, diversity of the economic base, the related economics of public health, current economic trends, and economic recruitment strategies.

The Element provides a platform for local officials to identify the types of employment desired and the general location where such opportunities should be directed, while ensuring the distribution of economic benefits to residents throughout the County. The Element also examines the role of the County and its municipalities within the context of the regional and statewide economy.

The intent of this Element is to foster the development of a sound economic base for Oconee County. This base should offer a range of employment opportunities for residents, support the economic competitiveness of existing and future employers, promote a highly trained and educated workforce, complement the County's rich cultural and natural resource base, and strengthen the overall quality of life for all residents.

A. REGIONAL ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Economic diversity is a vital component in achieving community sustainability. The ability of residents to live near their places of work and the local availability of goods and services are major factors in a healthy economy. Oconee County is situated in multiple and sometimes overlapping planning, economic development, and service delivery regions (Map 4-1). The County is located midway along the highly traveled I-85 corridor that links the Charlotte Metro region to Atlanta. As South Carolina's northwestern-most county, Oconee is the State's closest community to metro Atlanta.

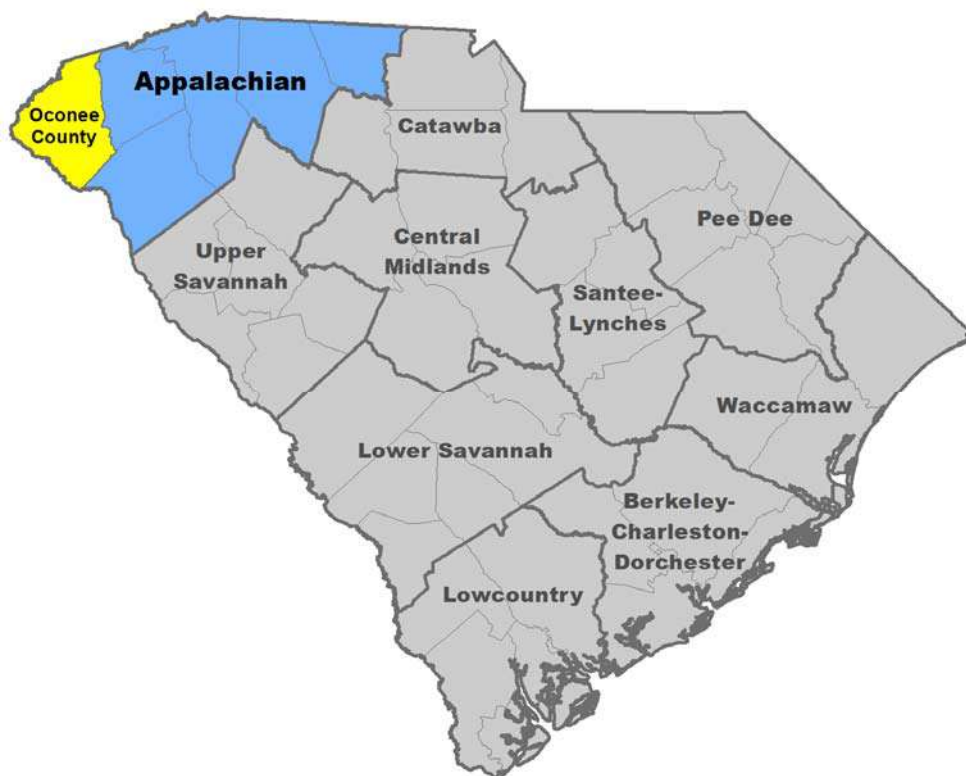
Together with Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Pickens, and Spartanburg Counties, Oconee County is part of the Appalachian Council of Governments region for transportation, transit, aging services, community development and infrastructure grants, and workforce development programs. For purposes of industrial recruitment and economic development activity, Oconee County is a member of the ten-county Upstate SC Alliance. For workforce development and job



training and placement services, the County is within the three-county Tri-County Technical College service area and the WorkLinks Workforce Investment Area that includes Anderson and Pickens Counties. Oconee County is also part of the larger federally-designated Appalachian Regional Commission service area comprised of 420 counties throughout 12 states.

The state's Appalachian region encompasses the northwestern corner of South Carolina. The region is home to a population of more than 1.2 million, nearly one quarter of the State's population. The region has a combined civilian labor force of almost 628,000. Oconee County has a population of 76,972, with an active civilian labor force of more than 35,500.

Map 4-1. Oconee County Economic Location Map



B. INCOME AND WEALTH

As outlined in the *Cultural Element*, the Oconee area had long served as a settlement and trading route for the Creek and Cherokee. Early European economic activity in the area began in the late-eighteenth century with the construction of a militia outpost at the western fringe of the colonial frontier. This advantageous location transitioned to a trading outpost as more settlers moved west and the Cherokee were displaced from most of the area.

Present-day Oconee County was carved out of the western portion of the Pickens District in 1868, with Walhalla designated as the new County seat. Agriculture was the dominant

economic activity of the area until the westward expansion of rail service in the late nineteenth century. New communities such as Seneca and Westminster were products of the extension of rail access to the region. The arrival of the railroad also facilitated the rise of the textile industry as a major employer well into the twentieth century.

Following the Second World War, major infrastructure projects prompted additional changes in the County's economy. The post-war construction of the Interstate system included a segment of Interstate 85 in the southeastern corner of the County, opening both industry and resident access to new opportunities in surrounding counties and neighboring states. The construction of a series of dams for power generation created Lakes Hartwell, Keowee, and Jocassee. In addition to producing the energy to support growth in the region, these new lakes became valuable recreational and tourism assets.

Although agriculture continues to be a strong sector in the state and local economies, rapid post-war population growth ushered manufacturing to the forefront of the State's mid-century economy. Oconee County is now home to more than 60 industry-related companies that draw from a regional labor shed of more than 630,000 residents. The continued recruitment of new domestic and international employers – coupled with the expansion of existing industries, tourism, retail businesses, health care, higher education, and agribusiness – strengthens the tax base and increases the number and quality of job opportunities available to County residents.

Economic development is more than job creation. A well-designed economic development strategy raises the standard of living and increases the assets and income levels of residents. In addition to employment rates, companion measures of economic health include the property tax base, sales revenue, diversity of employment sectors, capital investment, income levels, educational attainment, and cost of living.

1. Property Tax Base

The value of the property tax base impacts the ability of the County and its municipalities to provide vital services and facilities and to make the necessary public investments to encourage private investment. Property taxes are also the leading source of revenue for local governments. Assessment ratios applied to manufacturing, commercial, and other classes of real property are based on classifications and rates established by the State of South Carolina (Table 4-1). For residential uses, the assessment ratio is 4% for owner-occupied, principal residences and 6% for other non-principal residential uses. Residential owner-occupied properties are exempt from school property taxes. The State also offers a homestead exemption for residents based on multiple qualifying factors that include age and disability.

A tax rate of 6% applies to other real estate such as commercial and rental properties and agricultural real property owned by corporations, while private agricultural properties are assessed at 4%. Manufacturers pay a tax rate of 10.5% for real and personal property. This rate will be reduced to 9% by 2023 through a manufacturing property tax exemption passed in 2017.



The assessment ratio for all other businesses is 6% for real property and 10.5% for personal property. Although the State sets the assessment rates, only local governments levy property taxes.

Table 4-1. South Carolina Real Property Assessment Rates

Property Classification	Tax Rate
Manufacturing and Utilities	10.5%
Residential Real Estate (Owner-Occupied)	4.0%
Commercial and Residential (Non-Owner-Occupied)	6.0%
Agricultural Property (Corporate)	6.0%
Agricultural Property (Private)	4.0%
Motor Vehicles	6.0%
Railroads, Pipelines, Airlines	9.5%
All Other Personal Property	10.5%

Source: S.C. Association of Counties, 2018 Property Tax Report

The County's total assessed value exceeded \$578 million in 2017, with a total appraised value of more than \$5.3 billion (*S.C. Index of Taxpaying Ability, 2019*). Annual property tax collections by type and percentage for Oconee County are shown in Table 4-2. Commercial and rental properties (including non-owner-occupied residential) top the County's assessed value categories at more than \$169 million, followed closely by utilities and owner-occupied properties at more than \$164 million and 162 million, respectively.

Table 4-2. Oconee County Annual Property Tax Base by Category

Base Category	Assessed Value
Owner-occupied (4%)	\$ 162,201,150
Agricultural (Private) (4%)	2,070,600
Agricultural (Corporate) (6%)	89,470
Commercial/Rental (6%)	169,576,155
Personal Property (Vehicles) (6%)	37,380,135
Other Personal Property (10.5%)	5,124,649
Manufacturing (10.5%)	8,390,953
Utility (10.5%)	164,428,624
Business Personal (10.5%)	7,367,923
Motor Carrier (9.5%)	3,469,729
Fee-in-Lieu/Joint Industrial Park	23,601,024
Total	\$ 578,700,412

Source: S.C. Department of Revenue, 2018 Local Government Finance Report

The County's base millage rate for 2018 was 71.00 with a value of one mil at \$559,921. This base rate covers county operations, debt service, economic development, Tri-County Technical College operations, and bridge and road maintenance. Table 4-3 compares the most recent value of a mill among Oconee and surrounding counties. Greenville has the highest value per mill at more than \$2.2 million, while Cherokee County has the lowest value at only \$172,125.



Table 4-3. Comparative Value of One Mill in Oconee County and Surrounding ACOG Counties

County	2018 Value of One Mil
Anderson County	\$ 744,000
Cherokee County	172,125
Greenville County	2,230,170
Oconee County	559,921
Pickens County	500,486
Spartanburg County	1,150,900

Source: 2018 Property Tax Report, S.C. Association of Counties

Municipal millage rates range from a high of 99.30 in Westminster to a low of 37.00 in Salem. The Oconee County School District exacts an additional, overlapping millage of 146.30 countywide. Additional mills not included in the County base support fire protection.

Table 4-4. Tax Millage Rates for Oconee County, Municipalities and Oconee County School District

Jurisdiction	2018 Millage Rate
Oconee County - Base Millage	.07100
Salem	.03700
Seneca	.06050
Walhalla	.08400
West Union	.04880
Westminster	.09930
Oconee County School District	.14630

Source: 2018 Property Tax Report, S.C. Association of Counties

Three utilities and seven manufacturers make up the list of the top ten principal taxpayers in Oconee County. These private sector employers collectively provide a third (33.3%) of the total assessed value countywide. Duke Energy tops the list, paying \$33.2 million in 2018 on a total assessed value of nearly \$159 million. This tax bill comprises almost 28% of the total taxable assessed value in the County. Nearly \$24 million of this total was appropriated to the Oconee County School District and Tri-County Technical College (*Oconee County CAFR, 2018*).

An industrial property tax abatement is available to qualified manufacturing businesses that make a minimum capital investment in Oconee County. This incentive provides a five-year property tax abatement from county ordinary operating taxes, excluding the school portion of the local millage. The abatement of municipal taxes is at the discretion of each municipality. Local governments can also negotiate Fee-in-Lieu of Tax (FILOT) agreements with companies making larger capital investments.

In addition to temporary tax incentives, the overall business tax structure of the State can impact economic competitiveness and performance through corporate, individual income,

sales, unemployment insurance, and property taxes. South Carolina ranks 37th nationally in terms of its overall business tax climate, trailing all other southeastern states including neighboring North Carolina (11), Georgia (36) and Florida (4), as well as Tennessee (14), Alabama (35), Mississippi (24), and Virginia (31). However, the State ranks 15th for favorable corporate tax structure, 32nd for sales taxes, and 24th for property taxes (*2018 State Business Tax Climate Index*). There is no state sales tax on manufacturing equipment, industrial power, or materials for finished products. The absence of state property taxes and no local income taxes help minimize operating costs for employers in the County. The County also does not charge a business license tax or business registration fee. This favorable business climate is enhanced locally, as Oconee County has the third lowest property tax in South Carolina.

2. Taxable Sales

Other key indicators of community wealth include revenues from retail sales, the local option sales tax, and accommodations and admissions taxes. The State of South Carolina has established a statewide base sales tax of 6% applied to the retail sale, lease, or rental of tangible personal property. Supplemental taxes based on community needs can be added by local governments, if approved by voters. These include Local Option, School District, Transportation, Capital Projects, Tourism Development, and Education Capital Improvement taxes. Oconee County currently does not have additional sales taxes in effect. Pickens and Cherokee are the only two counties in the Appalachian Region with the 1% Local Option tax in effect, while Anderson and Cherokee Counties have an Educational Capital Improvement sales tax.

The level of taxable sales generally reflects the overall state of the economy, which influences purchasing decisions. Net taxable sales include automobiles, food, and merchandise. However, consumer money spent on gasoline, accommodations, and admission fees are not included in net taxable income data. Oconee County had nearly \$2 billion in gross retail sales and more than \$558 million in net taxable sales in 2016, ranking among the top twenty South Carolina counties.

Admissions taxes are collected at a rate of 5% of the paid admission for any amusement venue for which an admission fee is charged, including night clubs, sporting events, amusement parks, golf courses, movie theaters, bowling alleys, concerts, and health clubs. Admissions taxes collected countywide totaled \$254,100 in FY 2016, which is the most recent data available. An additional 2% state sales tax is imposed on the gross proceeds from the rental of rooms, lodging, and sleeping accommodations. Accommodations tax collections within Oconee County totaled \$251,846 in FY 2016, ranking 19th highest among the counties.

3. Commercial and Industrial Land Uses

The availability of desirable land for industrial and commercial purposes is necessary for economic growth. Land areas classified as industrial are those used to manufacture, assemble,



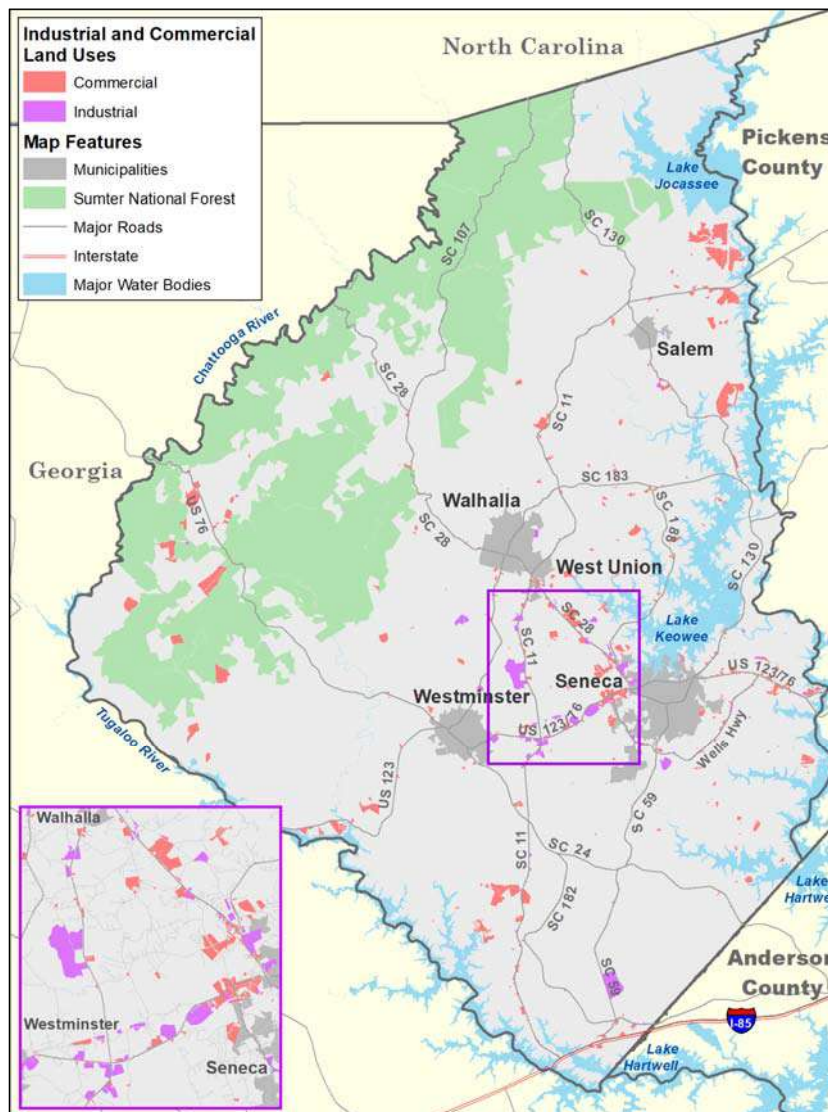
process, or fabricate goods, and to store (warehouse) or transport goods. Examples include manufacturing plants, industrial parks, truck terminals, and warehouses. Countywide, there are nearly 2,000 acres currently in industrial use, representing less than 1% of the total land area (Table 4-5). Most industries in the County are located in the central and southern portion of the County near Westminster and Seneca (U.S. Highways 123 and 76 and S.C. Highways 28 and 11), and along the I-85 corridor (Map 4-2).

Table 4-5. Existing Industrial and Commercial Land Use in Oconee County, 2019

Land Use	Acres	% of all Land Uses
Commercial	7,211.2	1.9%
Industrial	1,917.2	0.5%

Sources: Oconee County Assessor, 2018; Oconee County GIS, 2019

Map 4-2. Existing Industrial and Commercial Land Uses in Oconee County, 2019



Sources: Oconee County Assessor, 2018; Oconee County GIS Department, 2019



Commercial land areas are used to conduct business, trade activities, administrative activities, professional activities or services, or personal services. Examples of commercial uses include establishments for retail sale or wholesale of goods and services, restaurants, entertainment facilities, administrative or professional offices, gas stations, grocery stores, hair stylists, dry cleaners, furniture stores, clothing stores, car sales, law offices, doctor offices, CPAs, real estate offices, hotels/motels, lumber sales, private gyms, post offices, and nursery or garden centers. Commercial land uses account for almost 2% of the County's land area at 7,211 acres. Commercial uses are more evenly distributed throughout the County, with concentrations in and near the City of Seneca and along U.S. Highway 123 and S.C. Highways 28 and 11 leading to the cities of Walhalla, Westminster, and Clemson. Smaller concentrations of commercial uses are also found near Salem, Long Creek, and the lake areas.

4. Capital Investment

Industrial capital investment in equipment, buildings, and land is an important contributor to the local economy, yielding more tax revenue per investment dollar to schools and local governments than residential and commercial development. The economic multiplier for manufacturing industries is typically much higher than for retail, health services, and personal business services.

Efforts to recruit new employers to the County have targeted industries in bioscience, energy, automotive, and advanced manufacturing. Oconee County has also experienced industrial employment growth through international investment. The County is now home to facilities of companies based in China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Sweden.

From 2010 to 2018, new and expanded manufacturing capital investment in Oconee County surpassed \$613 million and yielded 2,278 new jobs (Table 4-6). The highest number of manufacturing jobs was created by BorgWarner in its 2018 expansion, adding 160 new jobs. The County's highest single capital investment to date was also the \$73 million expansion of the BorgWarner facility in Seneca.

Table 4-6. Oconee County Economic Development Announcements, 2010 to Present

Year	Company	Product	Type	Capital Investment	Jobs
2010	JTEKT/Koyo Bearings USA	Bearings/steering systems	Expansion	\$ 5,000,000	0
2010	U.S. Engine Valve	Automotive engine valves	Expansion	18,000,000	10
2010	Schneider Electric	Motor control centers/chargers	Expansion	5,000,000	5
2011	Collins Craft	Woven fiberglass	Expansion	1,750,000	5
2011	BASF	Precious metal catalyst	Expansion	60,000,000	25
2011	Altera Polymers	Polyolefin/engineered resins	New	4,000,000	50
2012	RBC Aerostructures	Aerospace control rods	New	7,000,000	75
2012	BorgWarner	Transfer cases/wheel tech	Expansion	25,000,000	30
2013	Ulbrich Precision Flatwire	Specialty flat wire	Expansion	5,000,000	0
2013	BorgWarner	Transfer cases/wheel tech	Expansion	24,600,000	105
2013	Technology Solutions of SC	Energy information technology	New	1,500,000	7
2013	COE Optics	Optoelectronics research	New	1,000,000	5
2013	Sandvik	Cutting tools	Expansion	12,000,000	0
2013	Greenfield Industries	Cutting tools	Expansion	5,000,000	0
2014	HeliBasket	Helicopter external load equip	Expansion	500,000	8
2014	ACI Plastics	Thermoplastics processor	New	4,110,000	25
2014	US Engine Valve	Automotive engine valves	Expansion	29,500,000	125
2014	Plastic Products	Plastic injection molding	New	3,200,000	68
2014	BorgWarner	Transfer cases/wheel tech	Expansion	0	45
2014	Greenfield Industries	Cutting tools	Expansion	8,200,000	38
2015	ITECH South	Custom injection molding	Expansion	6,030,000	34
2015	ITT Enidine	Hydraulic/pneumatic comp	Expansion	2,500,000	0
2015	CRM Global	CNC machining components	New	500,000	10
2015	BorgWarner	Transfer cases/wheel tech	Expansion	13,350,000	51
2015	U.S. Building Innovations	Advanced coatings	New	1,020,000	31
2015	Casto Development	Commercial	New	30,000,000	300
2016	Nason Company	Pneumatic/hydraulic cylinders	Expansion	2,500,000	26
2016	Baxter Enterprises	Plastic injection molding	New	20,700,000	87
2016	Sealed Air	Plastic packaging/film	Expansion	6,800,000	0
2016	BASF	Precious metal catalyst	Expansion	60,000,000	0
2017	Jantzen (Perry Ellis)	Sports apparel distribution	Expansion	4,000,000	16
2017	Schneider Electric	Motor control centers/chargers	Expansion	7,329,800	56
2017	Itron	Electronic metering/control	Expansion	10,000,000	100
2017	BorgWarner	Transfer cases/wheel tech	Expansion	71,900,000	163
2017	PVS Sensors/Nacan	Hydraulic/pneumatic sensors	Expansion	N/A	N/A
2017	Sharpe Manufacturing	CNC machining	Expansion	N/A	N/A
2017	Vernon NDT	Ultrasound equipment	New	N/A	3
2017	Clemson EPOCH	Academic village commercial	New	60,000,000	30
2018	RBC Aerostructures	Aerospace control rods	Expansion	3,800,000	22
2018	JTEKT/Koyo Bearings USA	Bearings/steering systems	Expansion	19,400,000	56
2018	Keowee Brewing	Food & beverage manufacture	New	600,000	10
2018	Jocassee Brewing	Food & beverage manufacture	New	250,000	5
2018	Lakeside Lodge	Commercial	New	45,000,000	30
2019	Horton, Inc.	Engine cooling solutions	New	22,000,000	125
2019	Baxter	Plastic injection molding	Expansion	5,700,000	2

Source: Oconee Economic Alliance, 2019



5. Employment Centers

The County's list of top employers includes K-12 education, manufacturing, local government, and energy (Table 4-7). Although the County School District tops the list of major employers, manufacturers comprise two-thirds of the list that features producers of automotive products and metal products. These ten manufacturers contribute nearly 5,000 jobs to the local employment base. Six of these employers represent internationally headquartered firms.

Table 4-7. Major Employers in Oconee County

Rank	Employer	Employees	Location	Sector/Product
1	Oconee County School District	1,549	Multiple	Education
2	Duke Energy Corporation	1,314	Seneca	Energy
3	Oconee Memorial Hospital	1,300	Seneca	Healthcare
4	BorgWarner	970	Seneca	Automotive Transfer Cases
5	Itron, Inc.	930	West Union	Electronic Measuring Devices
6	JTEKT/Koyo Bearings USA, LLC	580	West Union	Automotive Bearings
7	Schneider Electric	550	Seneca	Motor Control Centers
8	Oconee County Government	470	Walhalla	Local Government
9	BASF Corp.	400	Seneca	Precious Metal Catalyst & Refining
10	U.S. Engine Valve Corp.	380	Westminster	Automotive Engine Valves
11	Greenfield Industries	350	Seneca	Cutting Tools
12	Sandvik, Inc.	305	Westminster	Cutting Tools
13	Johnson Controls	240	West Union	Plastics
14	Perry Ellis International	180	Seneca	Apparel Distribution
15	Baxter Enterprises	180	Westminster	Automotive Interior Door Panels

Source: Oconee Economic Alliance, 2019

Map 4-3 depicts the location of the County's major employers by numbered rank as listed in Table 4-7, as well as the three county-owned industrial parks. The parks offer more than 700 buildable acres for new industry. All three have attained certification by the S.C. Department of Commerce.

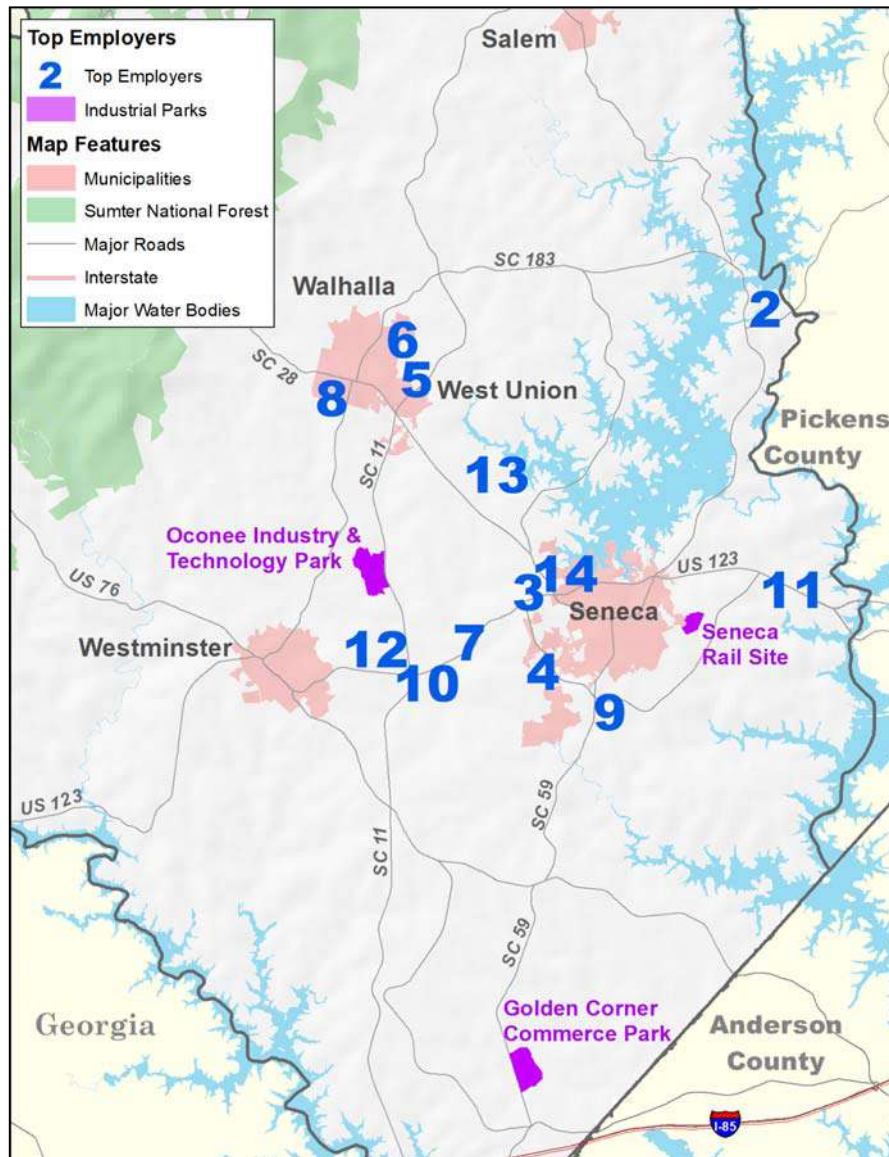
The 322-acre *Golden Corner Commerce Park* (GCCP) is located just north of Interstate 85 on S.C. Highway 59. The certified park is designed to accommodate manufacturing, warehouse, and distribution facilities. Wastewater service has been completed.

The *Oconee Industry and Technology Park* (OITP) is a certified site located on S.C. Highway 11 in the triangle between Walhalla, Westminster, and Seneca. The 422-acre park is the site of the new Tri-County Technical College (TCTC) campus and a planned 138,000 square foot high school career center that will open in the fall of 2020. In addition to college and school district training facilities of the new *Center for Workforce Development*, current employers include Baxter Manufacturing and Horton, Inc.



Located on the east side of Seneca, the certified *Seneca Rail Park* (SRP) is a rail-served manufacturing park on 111 acres near U.S. Highway 123. In addition to its close proximity to Clemson University, this site has been designated as a *certified fiber ready* industrial park, the first industrial park in Upstate South Carolina to receive this designation. The Park is also within a *New Market Tax Credit Zone* and a designated *Qualified Opportunity Zone* with federal incentives.

Map 4-3. Major Employers and Industrial Parks in Oconee County



Source: Oconee Economic Alliance, 2019



6. Income

Income can be assessed through a variety of indicators that include per capita income, total personal income, poverty levels, living wage indicators, and earnings. *Per capita income* is an income average computed for each individual in the population. Per capita income for Oconee County residents at \$25,944 is slightly higher than that of South Carolina at \$25,521, but trails the national income of \$29,829.

Poverty level data is based on thresholds established by the Federal government that are linked to changes in the cost of living and the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Poverty is defined as having insufficient resources to meet basic living expenses, including the costs of food, shelter, clothing, transportation and medical expenses. The percentage of Oconee County residents living in poverty is 19%, above the percentage of impoverished State residents at 17.2% and the national poverty rate of 15.1%. Among Oconee County households, 16.4% (5,076 households) live in poverty. The highest percentage of County residents living in poverty includes working age adults between 18 and 44 years of age at 42.1%. *Low and moderate income (LMI) households* are those households with incomes below 80% of median family income. As detailed in the *Housing and Population Elements*, 40% of Oconee County households are considered to be LMI.

The *Basic Family Budget Calculator* developed by the Economic Policy Institute estimates the minimum income needed to cover basic living expenses to provide a secure, yet modest standard of living. Under the EPI model, a family of four with two adults and two children living in Oconee County would need an annual income of \$65,570 – or a monthly income of \$5,464 – to adequately provide for basic housing, food, transportation, child care, taxes, and health care costs (*Economic Policy Institute, 2018*).

Living wage indicators have been developed by MIT researchers to determine the market-based cost of living within communities in each state. The living wage estimate for families living and working in Oconee County estimates the full-time hourly rate that a resident (employed full-time at 2,080 hours annually) must earn to support a family for expenses such as food, child care, transportation, medical, and housing costs. Using this formula, the working head of household for a typical family of four in the County would have to make approximately \$23.75 an hour to support the family's basic needs for housing, medical, child care, transportation, and food.

The *average annual wage* is computed by dividing total annual wages by annual average employment. The average weekly and annual wage in Oconee County ranks 5th highest in the State at an hourly rate of \$24.25 per hour and annual earnings of \$50,440 (Table 4-8).



Table 4-8. Comparison of Average Annual Wage for Oconee and Adjacent Counties

Location	Average Annual Wage	State Rank
Anderson County	\$ 41,652	22
Cherokee County	35,620	42
Greenville County	49,972	7
Oconee County	50,440	5
Pickens County	41,652	23
Spartanburg County	47,060	12
South Carolina	46,488	N/A

Source: S.C. Department of Employment & Workforce, Q4 2018

As detailed in Figure 4-9, the highest average annual wages in Oconee County are generated in Wholesale Trade, Administrative & Waste Management Services, and Manufacturing. The Accommodation and Food Services industry yielded the lowest average annual wages in the County at \$15,340. At more than \$57,000, the average Manufacturing sector job in Oconee County offers more than three times the average annual wage of an Accommodation and Food Services sector job.

Table 4-9. Average Annual Salary by Industry for Oconee County, Region and State, 2016

Industry	Oconee County	Worklink Workforce Region	South Carolina
Accommodation and Food Services	\$ 15,340	\$ 15,392	\$ 18,096
Administrative & Waste Management Service	67,860	40,300	35,672
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	26,468	28,392	39,000
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	20,020	15,704	21,996
Construction	40,456	45,916	57,304
Finance and Insurance	55,692	52,572	67,236
Health Care and Social Assistance	52,312	47,736	52,416
Information	50,232	51,584	60,580
Management of Companies and Enterprises	44,668	84,448	82,576
Manufacturing	57,096	56,940	60,788
Other Services (except Public Administration)	31,876	31,824	34,996
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	55,172	55,952	77,376
Public Administration	38,896	38,428	48,048
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	44,668	45,760	49,348
Retail Trade	26,936	26,260	28,288
Transportation and Warehousing	49,296	48,724	46,540
Utilities	52,624	99,164	83,616
Wholesale Trade	176,800	74,932	72,592

Source: S.C. Department of Employment & Workforce (Q4 2018), 2019

Local average wages by sector are particularly relevant when considering the minimum living wage estimates previously provided in Table 4-8. County economic development strategies



should consider the need to provide a balanced sector mix to ensure adequate earnings opportunity for Oconee County residents. Although the services sector represents a growing segment of the national and local economy, these jobs often offer lower pay and fewer benefits than many other sector employment opportunities.

7. Retirees

An influx of retirees to a community, coupled with higher numbers of current residents who are aging-in-place, can influence the local economy by spurring growth to meet the demands of a growing and older population. The benefits of growing the retirement base of a community generally include higher incomes and educational levels, economic stability and vibrancy, and a neutral fiscal impact on service delivery (*Golden Rules, University of Georgia, 2013*). It is estimated that one new job is generated by every two new retirees to a community. As a result, retiree recruitment has become part of the overall economic development strategy for many communities.

Retirees relocating to a community generally seek certain non work-related amenities and quality of life factors that include mild climate, lower cost of living, low crime rates, quality housing options, medical services, cultural and recreational opportunities, and services for seniors. More recent studies show that retirees are placing an increasing emphasis on cultural, educational, and wellness opportunities as well as technology access in their new communities (*Attracting Retirees to South Carolina, 2016*). Research shows that most retirement relocation decisions are not made in a few months, but are made over a period of years leading up to actual retirement. Opportunities to attract retirees often occur when they first visit a community as tourists much earlier, closely linking tourism and retiree recruitment strategies. As a result, many states including neighboring North Carolina, have launched *Certified Retirement Community* programs similar to initiatives geared toward industrial development. These program assess communities in terms of access to health care, volunteer and part-time employment opportunities, recreation and wellness, climate, tax structure, safety, and lifelong education and entertainment.

South Carolina ranks well in common retirement metrics such as quality of life, climate, health care, and affordability. Approximately two-thirds of the nearly 110,000 people who made South Carolina their new home in 2017 were over the age of 50 (*The Center for Carolina Living*). The State consistently ranks within the top ten retirement destination lists of national publications such as Kiplinger's, Southern Living, Forbes, Conde Nast, and U.S. News & World Report. A retirement preference survey conducted by the University of South Carolina found that most potential retirees to the State prefer to retire in small towns, coastal regions, mountains, rural, and urban areas.

Armed with potentially significant purchasing power, retirees impact the local economy particularly in the areas of health care, retail, and housing. Current retirees in South Carolina generate an annual economic impact of nearly \$30 billion (*Attracting Retirees to South Carolina,*



2016). The annual rate of in-migration of retirees is close to 54,000. The Upstate has emerged as a favorable destination for many of the State's retirees. Oconee County is particularly poised to attract retirees seeking convenient access to the Greenville metro area, Interstate access, the more relaxed climate of smaller cities and towns, the cultural and sports venues of nearby Clemson University, lower traffic congestion, and abundant natural lake and mountain amenities. The City of Seneca was named among the top fifteen retirement cities (*SmartAssets*) and Oconee County was named among the top 10 in the nation for living and boating (*Boating Magazine*).

Communities attracting large numbers of retirees should also plan for the impacts of an aging population. The future needs of the retiree population should be evaluated to determine the types of cultural activities, amenities, facilities and services needed to serve current and recruit additional retirees to the County. An older population typically has a greater need for specialized health care providers and facilities, aging services, transportation, and housing options. The influences of an older population on the types and focus of community services and programming can also affect the appeal of a community to younger families and young professionals whose interests may differ.

C. WORKFORCE

Employers require access to a qualified workforce to survive and grow, making the composition and size of a community's labor force one of the most critical factors in employer location and for building and maintaining a successful and strong economy. The labor force is the number of residents employed and those seeking employment and available for work. This number represents the combined pool of workers potentially available to employers.

Information on the population base and labor force characteristics can provide insight into the ability of Oconee County and its municipalities to attract and retain sound employers, as well as adapt to changing global economic trends. An understanding of the County's labor base requires an examination of underemployment and unemployment, education and skill levels of the incumbent and entering workforce, population growth, and commuting patterns.

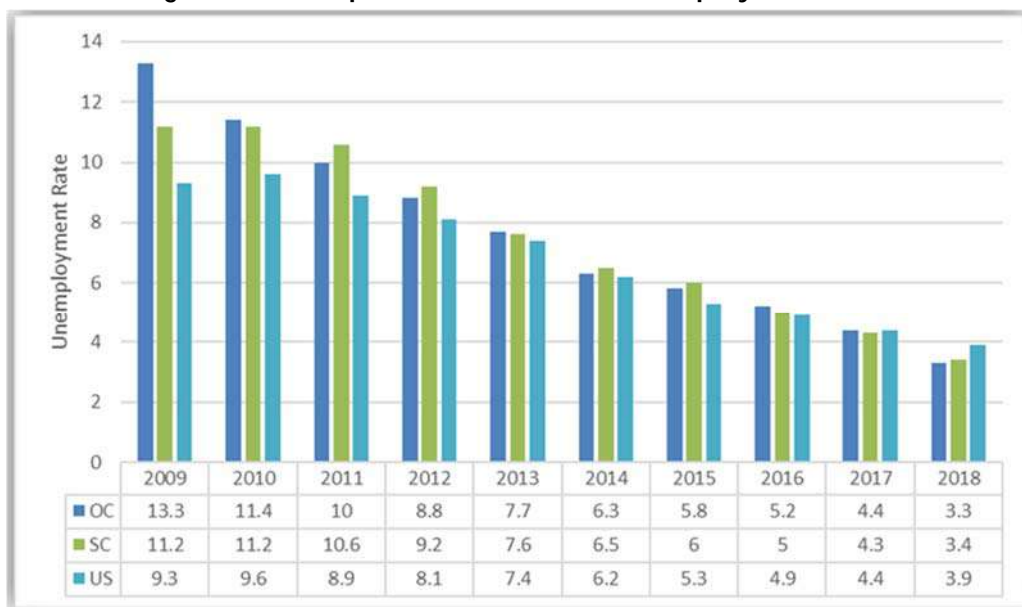
A healthy economy requires a stable and growing population. Population growth is fueled by multiple factors including job creation and capital investment, residential housing supply, fuel prices, rate of natural increase, and migration. The Oconee County population grew from 74,273 residents in 2010 to 75,375 by 2016. Projections indicate that the County population will reach 80,260 by 2023 and 83,459 residents by 2028. The ten-county Upstate SC Alliance region has a combined population of more than 1.48 million that is projected to surpass 1.56 million by 2023, with a labor force that totals more than 685,000 adults.



1. Unemployment and Underemployment

The unemployment rate reflects the number of individuals who are without work and are actively seeking employment. Unemployment rates for Oconee County are consistently lower than statewide unemployment for each of the last ten years. Figure 4-1 compares ten-year unemployment trends for the County, the Appalachian Council of Governments Region, South Carolina, and the United States. Reported job losses due to mass layoffs in the County totaled 357 from 2008 through 2018. This mass layoff occurred in 2012 at the Itron plant in West Union.

Figure 4-1. Comparison of Ten-Year Unemployment Rates



Source: S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce, 2019

The economic recession prompted a sharp rise in the County’s unemployment to a high of 13.3% in 2009 that has been followed by a steady decrease over the last nine years to a low of 3.3% by the end of 2018. The County’s 2018 annual unemployment rate was lower than both state and national rates.

The most recent data published by the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce reveals that among Oconee County workers filing unemployment claims, more than half had attended, but not completed, college. Over a third (36%) of jobless residents were between 41 and 55 years old, while another third (33%) were between the ages of 25 and 40 years.

Another key workforce concern is *underemployment*. An underemployed worker is generally one who is overqualified in a current job and interested in other employment. Many underemployed residents are in part-time or temporary jobs that may lack key benefits such as health insurance. Oconee County and the surrounding region has a higher level of



underemployment at 16.3% that the State as a whole at 16.2% (*Comprehensive Regional Workforce Analysis, 2018*).

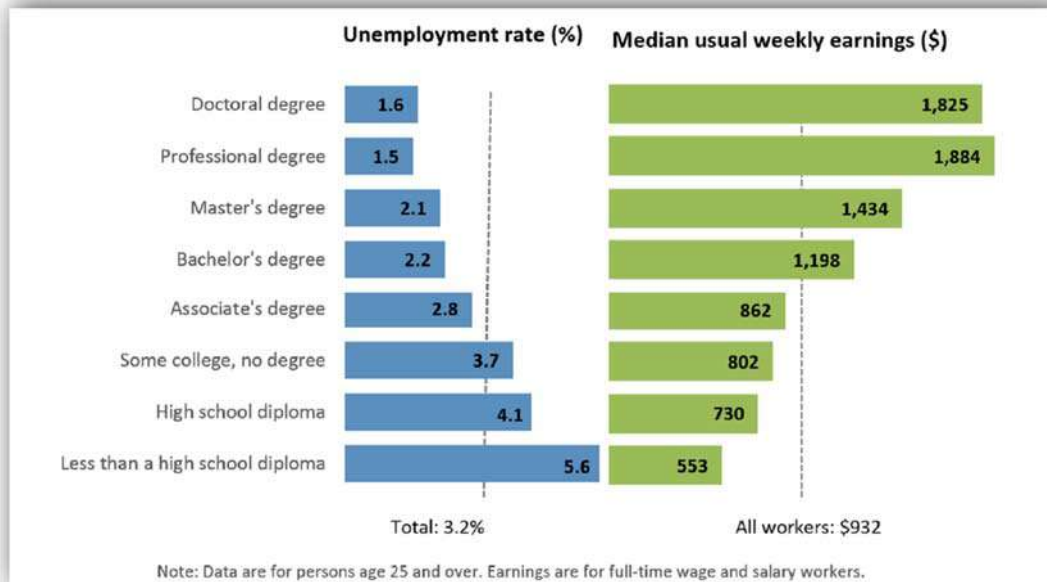
On a positive note, unemployment and underemployment are two contributing factors to the potential pool of qualified labor for new businesses looking to locate in the County. Underemployed workers are often the first to respond to new job opportunities with new and expanding industries, and often have more skills than their jobs require.

2. Education and Skills

An educated and skilled workforce is integral to building a strong local economy. Local educational attainment levels provide an important indicator of the long-term economic competitiveness of Oconee County and its municipalities. County efforts to increase the educational attainment and encourage postsecondary training is yielding results with new and rewarding job opportunities that strengthen quality of life and community prosperity.

Educational attainment is an significant indicator of current and future earnings potential. U.S. Department of Labor data reveals that the national median weekly earnings in 2018 were \$553 for a person without a high school diploma, compared to \$730 for a worker with a high school diploma and \$862 for an associate degree holder (Figure 4-2). Individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher had median earnings ranging from \$1,198 to \$1,884 per week. Unemployment is also generally lower for individuals with higher educational attainment. At the national level, residents with no high school diploma experienced an unemployment rate of 5.6%, compared to the rate for adults with a bachelor's degree at only 2.2%. Individuals with a high school diploma, but no college, had an unemployment rate of 4.1%.

Figure 4-2. National Earnings and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment, 2018



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018

In South Carolina, a worker with less than a high school diploma makes an average annual wage of \$19,864, compared to a high school graduate or GED holder who earns \$26,702 (*American Community Survey, 2013-2017*). In Oconee County, the annual earnings gap between a high school dropout (\$16,131) and a high school graduate (\$24,879) is even higher at \$8,748. A South Carolinian with some college or an associate degree earns an average of \$32,022, while income with a bachelor's degree averages \$45,757. Oconee County residents with an associate degree or some college earn an annual average of \$31,207, while those with a four-year degree average \$42,496. A State resident with a graduate or professional degree has an annual average income of \$55,414. County residents with post-graduate degrees average \$62,345.

Nearly 84% of County residents aged 25 and older have completed high school. This percentage is slightly under the state average of 86%. The percentage of County residents with a Bachelor's degree or higher rose from 18.2% to 23.5%. Likewise, the percentage of residents with some college, including those with an associate degree, increased from 22.5% to 28.8%. The percentage of County residents who lack a high school education has steadily declined.

Oconee County is similar to the State in the percentage of residents with postsecondary degrees, with 8.9% of County residents holding an associate degree, 13.9% a baccalaureate degree, and 9.6% a graduate or professional degree. Statewide, 9.1% of South Carolinians have earned an associate degree, 16.9% a baccalaureate degree, and 9.6% a graduate or professional degree.

Table 4-10. Oconee County Educational Attainment, 2016

Educational Attainment	Oconee County				South Carolina			
	2000		2016		2000		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Population 25 Years and Over	45,896	100.0%	53,965	100.0%	2,596,010	100.0%	3,269,424	100.0%
Less Than 9th Grade	5,118	11.2%	3,329	6.2%	215,776	8.3%	153,262	4.7%
9th to 12th Grade, No Diploma	6,877	15.0%	5,468	10.1%	398,503	15.4%	302,825	9.3%
High School Graduate*	15,237	33.2%	16,963	31.4%	778,054	30.0%	963,022	29.5%
Some College, No Degree	7,420	16.2%	10,698	19.8%	500,194	19.3%	686,140	21.0%
Associate Degree	2,913	6.3%	4,817	8.9%	173,428	6.7%	299,118	9.1%
Bachelor's Degree	5,060	11.0%	7,486	13.9%	351,526	13.5%	551,968	16.9%
Graduate/Professional Degree	3,271	7.1%	5,204	9.6%	178,529	6.9%	313,089	9.6%

*Includes equivalency

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2012-2016 ACS

Educational achievement and skill proficiency levels among the local workforce strongly influence employer interest in locating to the area, as well as productivity and satisfaction with the workforce for existing employers. The path to educational achievement and job readiness starts in the K through 12 school system. Public schools are a vital community resource in attracting new employers and in preparing residents for a knowledge-based, global economy.

Strengthening the college and career readiness of high school graduates is an emerging factor in state and local economic competitiveness. Readiness is demonstrated by additional measures of student achievement such as college entrance scores, Advanced Placement (AP) or dual enrollment course participation and pass rates, and postsecondary enrollment.

The School District of Oconee County (SDOC) operates a total of 16 schools with a combined enrollment of approximately 10,500 students. In addition to 10 elementary schools, three middle schools and three high schools, the District operates an alternative school for academic and discipline referrals, a career center, and an adult education center. The Hamilton Career Center provides career training for high school students in support of area workforce needs. In partnership with local business and industry, Tri-County Technical College (TCTC), and Oconee County, the School District will move its career center to a new state-of-the-art, 100,000 ft² facility scheduled for completion by fall 2020.

The school system offers advanced and extended learning opportunities that include Advanced Placement courses that offer college-level instruction and credit, career and technology education, virtual classes, and work-based learning. The District also maintains articulation agreements with the technical college to offer dual enrollment opportunities for high school students to gain both high school and college credit before graduation. Dual enrollment courses transfer to any state technical college or public university in South Carolina and can be taken at no cost for students meeting the minimum credit hours per semester. These credits give many local students a head start on postsecondary education and help reduce the total costs associated with college.



Table 4-11 details selected college and career performance data for the School District relative to high school SAT/ACT exam scores, state-mandated *End of Course Test* (EOCT) pass rates, graduation rate, and percentage of high school seniors eligible for the merit-based *Legislative Incentive for Future Excellence* (LIFE) scholarships for students attending postsecondary institutions within the State. The 2018 on-time graduation rate for Oconee County high school students was above the State average. LIFE eligibility for County graduates is almost 75%, with a postsecondary participation rate of nearly 71%. Composite ACT exam scores for County students were on par with the State average, at 18.9 and 19, respectively. Approximately one-third of Oconee County public high school students took the SAT in 2018, posting a composite SAT score average of 1091. This average was 27 points above the State score average.

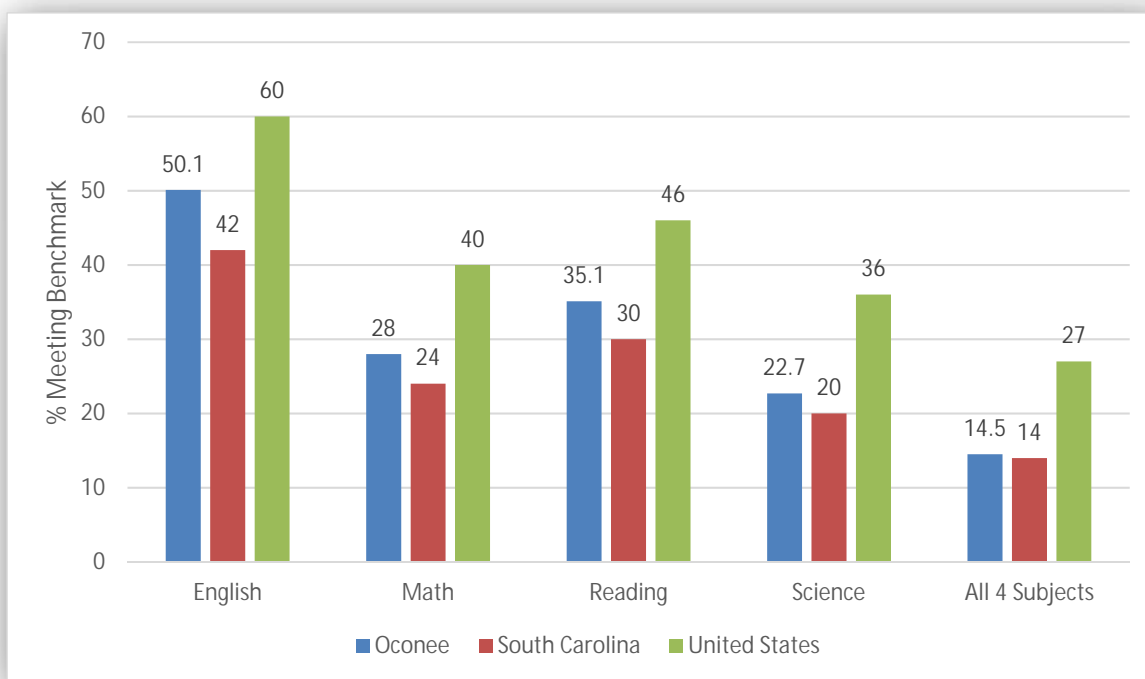
Table 4-11. Comparison of Selected High School Performance Measures

School District	SAT ¹	ACT ¹	% College Ready ²	4-Year Grad Rate	% LIFE Eligible	Postsecondary Enroll Rate ³
Oconee School District	1091	18.9	14.5%	84.1%	74.4%	70.8%
South Carolina	1064	19.0	14.0%	81.0%	N/A	N/A

¹Composite score for public school students; ²All 4 subjects; ³Enrolled in a 4 or 2-yr college by fall after graduation
 Source: 2018 School Report Cards, S.C. Department of Education

Figure 4-3 compares the college readiness of County seniors with graduates in the State and nation using the ACT College Readiness benchmarks.

Figure 4-3. Comparison of ACT College Readiness Benchmark Attainment



Source: ACT Score Reports, 2018



In addition to the ACT and SAT college readiness testing options, beginning in 2018 South Carolina high school students may take the *Ready to Work (R₂W)* career readiness assessment. The new test is administered to all eleventh grade students to determine student achievement in Applied Mathematics, Reading for Information, and Locating Information. Soft skills are also assessed in areas such as problem solving, goal setting, decision-making, and self-direction. Of the 704 Oconee County high school students who tested in 2018, nearly 85% received a certificate of job readiness for a broad range of jobs (*S.C. Department of Education, 2019*).

3. Existing and Projected Employment by Sector

The occupation of employed residents provides an overview of the local and regional economy and insight into individual earnings potential. Approximately 54% of the County's population aged 16 and older are participating in the labor force. Of the Oconee County residents currently in the civilian workforce, 78.5% are private wage and salary workers, 15.2% work in federal, state, and local government, and 6.2% are self-employed (*ACS, 2013-2017*).

State data on current employment by industry group reveals that Manufacturing is the leading employment sector in Oconee County, employing nearly 20% of the workforce (6,067) in 2018. Retail Trade ranks second highest with a workforce of more than 3,300. Health Care and Social Services ranks third highest at 2,871, followed by the Accommodation and Food Services sector that employs 1,775 Oconee workers. The lowest sector employment is found in Management of Companies, Real Estate and Rental, Transportation and Warehousing, and Agriculture, Fishing and Hunting, each with fewer than 200 jobs.

The latest available statewide industry employment projections cover the ten-year period from 2014 to 2024 (Table 4-12). The overall ten-year job growth rate within the three-county Worklinks Workforce Investment Area (WIA) is projected to approach 9.0%. All industry sectors are projected to increase in the County, with Administrative and Support employment leading with a projected growth rate of more than 26%, followed closely by the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services sector at 25.66%. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services employment includes accounting, legal, architectural, engineering, design, computer design, consulting, scientific, and advertising. Other sectors with growth rates over 20% include Health Care and Social Assistance and Construction. Projected growth rates in the WorkLink WIA are lowest in the Utilities and Manufacturing markets.



Table 4-12. WorkLink WIA Comparison of Labor Market Outlook by Industry to 2024*

Industry	% Increase 2014-2024
Health Care and Social Assistance	20.15%
Construction	21.48%
Educational Services	15.43%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management	26.25%
Retail Trade	6.14%
Accommodations and Food Services	10.67%
Manufacturing	3.61%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	25.66%
Other Services (Except Government)	6.63%
Finance and Insurance	8.57%
Wholesale Trade	15.57%
Transportation and Warehousing	14.88%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	8.16%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	9.63%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	8.36%
Information	7.07%
Utilities	0.42%
Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas Extraction	Confidential
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	Confidential
All Jobs	8.97

Source: S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce, Industry Projections, 2019

4. Commuting Patterns

Travel time to work, or commute time, can affect a worker's productivity and quality of life. The mean travel time to the workplace for Oconee County residents is 24.7 minutes, slightly above the 24.1 minute commute average for residents statewide. Nearly one-third (31.1%) of Oconee County workers have a commute time of less than 15 minutes to work. Eight percent of County workers drive an hour or more to work.

Personal vehicles are the primary travel mode to work for most Oconee County residents. Only 1.5% of County workers bike, walk, or travel to work on public transportation. Among workers living in Oconee County, 84.2% drive solo to work, while 10% participate in carpools. Only 3.3% of the County workforce works at home, which is slightly lower than the statewide percentage of 3.6% and the national rate of 4.6%.

Worker commuting patterns indicate 71% of the County's workforce live and work in the County, slightly above the statewide average of 70.6% (Table 4-13). Nearly one-in-four residents commute outside of the County to work, and 4.4% commute to jobs outside the state.

Table 4-13. Journey to Work, 2016

Workers 16 and Older	Oconee County	South Carolina	United States
Place of Work			
Worked in Town or City of Residence	4.1%	16.2%	31.5%
Worked in County of Residence	71.1%	70.6%	72.4%
Worked Outside County of Residence	24.5%	24.1%	23.9%
Worked Outside State of Residence	4.4%	5.3%	3.7%
Means of Transport to Work			
Car, Truck or Van – Drove Alone	84.2%	82.8%	76.4%
Car, Truck or Van – Carpooled	10.0%	9.3%	9.3%
Public Transportation	0.7%	0.6%	5.1%
Walked	0.8%	2.2%	2.8%
Bicycle	0.0%	0.3%	0.6%
Other Means - Taxi, Motorcycle, etc.	1.0%	1.2%	1.2%
Worked at Home	3.3%	3.6%	4.6%
Travel Time to Work			
14 minutes or less	31.1%	27.3%	26.7%
15 - 29 minutes	39.0%	39.5%	36.3%
30 to 59 minutes	21.6%	27.5%	28.4%
60 or more minutes	8.1%	5.6%	8.7%
Mean Travel Time to Work (minutes)	24.7	24.1	26.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey

Geographic data on worker commuting patterns is detailed in Table 4-14. Of the 7,870 Oconee County residents who travel outside the County for work, more than 45% commute to Pickens County employers, followed by workers commuting to Anderson (22.9%) and Greenville Counties (13.1%). These outgoing commuters offer a potential labor pool for new and expanding industries and businesses as more job opportunities are created closer to home.

Table 4-14. Oconee County Commuter Workforce - Leading Counties

Commuters into County		Commuters out of County	
County of Residence	Commuters	County of Employment	Commuters
Pickens County, SC	2,786	Pickens County, SC	3,553
Anderson County, SC	2,061	Anderson County, SC	1,802
Greenville County, SC	491	Greenville County, SC	1,034
Stephens County, GA	183	Stephens County, GA	213
Spartanburg County, SC	101	Jackson County, NC	168
Franklin County, GA	84	Spartanburg County, SC	137
Jasper County, SC	74	Fulton County, GA	77
Abbeville County, SC	73	Rutherford County, NC	67

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey



Nearly 6,580 workers from surrounding counties and nearby states travel to employers in Oconee County. Pickens County residents lead the influx of in-commuters at 42.4%, followed closely by workers from Anderson County at 31.3%. Table 4-14 lists the county of origin for workers commuting into Oconee County, as well as the destination of local commuters.

D. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Bolstered by a workforce development emphasis, direct Interstate access, expanded access to higher education, and strong tourism and natural resource assets, Oconee County is well-positioned for continued economic development growth. The County offers a comparably low cost of doing business that includes factors such as low taxes and utility rates, as well as a generally lower cost of living. As a right-to-work state, South Carolina ranks among the nation's least unionized states at a rate of only 1.6%.

State and local jurisdictions have the option of further creating a positive business climate by offering tax incentives that help employers reduce operating costs and boost return-on-investment, the provision of infrastructure, and the availability of low to no-cost specialized workforce development and training programs. Local governments can also streamline development review and permitting processes to facilitate clear communication of expectations and regulations and ensure the consistent enforcement of codes, ordinances, and regulations. The County can also promote the protection of existing and future business operations through sound planning for infrastructure and compatible land use.

1. Incentives

Public investments and incentives, when part of a well-planned development strategy, can provide an attractive business climate and increase private investment. The State and County can provide multiple tax incentives to existing and new businesses to encourage economic growth and investment. Among the strongest incentives available to State and local economic developers are the jobs tax credit, the fee-in-lieu of property taxes, and job development and retraining credits. Because the State does not tax real or personal property, property tax incentives must be implemented in conjunction with each county.

The State's 46 counties are ranked by the S.C. Department of Revenue each year in one of four tiers, with Tier I including the highest ranked counties and Tier IV including the lowest. Rankings are based on employment rates and per capita income. Oconee County is currently ranked among twelve counties in the second tier. This ranking is used by the State to determine the amount of jobs tax credits allocated to eligible employers in each county, with the larger credit amounts going to counties with the greatest economic need. The 2019 jobs tax credit amount for Oconee County is \$2,750.

The ability to offer many of these incentives depends on the formal approval of the S.C. Department of Revenue and local city and county councils. In addition to the incentives listed in



Table 4-15, the wide range of tax credits available to employers includes credits for hiring displaced workers, conservation and habitat management, child care, textile mill and abandoned sites revitalization, and minority businesses. Green incentives are available to promote recycling facilities and energy conservation and renewable energy improvements with recycling, solar, biomass, and renewable fuels.

Table 4-15. State and Local Business Incentives

Available Incentives by Type	Authority	
	State	Local
<i>Corporate Income Tax and Incentives</i>		
Job Tax Credits	✓	
Investment Tax Credit	✓	
Corporate Headquarters Credit	✓	
Research & Development Tax Credit	✓	
Sales Tax Exemption	✓	
Port Volume Increase Tax Credit	✓	
Agricultural Products Purchases Credit	✓	
Corporate Income Tax Moratorium	✓	
<i>State Discretionary Incentives</i>		
Job Development Credit	✓	
Job Retraining Credit	✓	
Economic Development Set-aside Program	✓	
Rural Infrastructure Fund	✓	
Enterprise Zone Retraining Credit Program	✓	
<i>Local Property Tax Incentives</i>		
Fee-In-Lieu of Taxes (FILOT)		✓
Five-Year Property Tax Abatement		✓
Property Tax Exemptions	✓	✓
Textile Revitalization Credit		✓
Revitalization of Abandoned Building Credit		✓

Source: 2019 S.C. Business Incentives Guide, S.C. Department of Commerce

2. Workforce Development

Workforce development is a leading challenge in economic development efforts. The availability of a trained and highly skilled workforce is a major consideration in business location decisions for most employers. Workforce quality is also important. The emphasis of state, regional, and county recruitment efforts on attracting higher-wage, higher-tech employers requires a better-educated and more technologically proficient workforce.

Employment and training resources are offered by State and local providers in Oconee County through the K-12 school system, the technical college system, adult education, and specialized workforce training and job placement programs. Expanded access to training resources has contributed to the rising educational attainment and employability of Oconee County residents.



The *School District of Oconee County (SDOC)* offers diverse academic and elective programs in its middle and high schools. The District's *Hamilton Career Center* is the center for high school technology education in Oconee County. The Center currently enrolls 1,000 students from the three district high schools. The District offers technical electives that support 13 career clusters that range from health science and culinary arts to welding and computer science. Students can explore career interests, train for a specific career, gain employability skills, earn state and national certification, and prepare for postsecondary education. County students can also learn about careers, specific job skills and other workplace expectations by participating in work-based opportunities such as job shadowing and internships. Oconee County conducts a *Youth Apprenticeship Program* in partnership with the School District and Apprenticeship Carolina. Students acquire hands-on experience in various business settings and gain a deeper understanding of today's global business environment.

The SDOC also operates the *Oconee County Adult Education* program to prepare residents to obtain the High School Equivalency (GED) diploma. Housed at the Code Learning Center in Seneca, SDOC programs include adult and family literacy, career ready certification, and workplace skills.

To help future Oconee County graduates prepare for productive futures, the SDOC and the Oconee Economic Alliance created NOW (Nurturing Oconee's Workforce) as a manufacturing focused workforce development initiative launched in the fall of 2016. Thirty students, ten from each local high school, are selected each year as NOW Scholars. Participants attend monthly advanced employment skills and career awareness workshops, industry exposure and networking, and tours and internships with Oconee County's top manufacturing employers. The inaugural class graduated in 2018 to pursue specializations in diverse, high demand fields including mechatronics, machine tool technology, welding, mechanical engineering, and agricultural mechanization.

Oconee County is served by *Tri-County Technical College (TCTC)*, one of 16 public, two-year colleges that comprise the S.C. Technical Education System. The College serves a combined enrollment of 6,082 in its three-county service area from its main campus in Pendleton, as well as through satellite campuses in each of the three counties. The new Oconee County campus opened in the fall of 2018 and is located at the Oconee Industry and Technology Park on S.C. Highway 11 in Westminster. The campus is designed to support regional manufacturing with programs that include CNC Programming and Operations, Manufacturing Management and Leadership, Business Administration and Operations Management, Industrial Electronics Technology, and Mechatronics. The campus also offers dual enrollment for area high school students, university transfer courses, and S.C. Manufacturing Certification. By 2020, the campus will also house the new School District of Oconee County Career Center. The TCTC campus co-location with the SDOC career center and local industry will form an innovative center for technical education, work-based learning, and economic development.



In addition to formal K-12 and postsecondary learning opportunities, the State also offers targeted training programs specifically tailored to the workforce development needs of businesses and industries. Oconee County residents and employers have access to proven workforce development programs that play a critical role in economic development. These job training and re-training programs help attract and retain employers by providing a pool of highly-skilled labor.

Table 4-16. Oconee County Workforce Development Resources

Partner	Workforce Development Role
Worklinks Workforce Development Area (SCWorks)	Leverages <i>Workforce Investment Act</i> funds and other resources as part of the 10-region workforce development system. Partners include the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce, Tri-County Technical College, and the S.C. Vocational Rehabilitation Department. Centers provide multiple services to help employers find qualified workers, while job seekers and incumbent workers can access employment and training services. Services include internet access, labor market information, resume writing assistance, job search workshops and placement services, adult education and literacy programs, senior employment assistance, veteran employment and training programs, community-based agency assistance, unemployment insurance, and skills assessment.
readySC™	Statewide training resource administered by the S.C. Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education for new and expanding companies in South Carolina, with an estimated value per employee of up to \$9,500. Short-term training is customized to meet the specific needs of employers and conducted on-site as needed. Includes tailored employee recruitment, screening, and training for businesses at little or no cost. The program has trained 298,000 South Carolinians to date.
Apprenticeship Carolina™	Program of the S.C. Technical College System and the S.C. Department of Commerce launched the program as a statewide, coordinated approach to the promotion and support of registered occupational apprenticeships. The program provides supervised on-the-job training and related technical instruction (RTI) through registered apprenticeships in nearly 1,000 occupations. Regional workforce investment funds can be leveraged for eligible expenditures including instruction, training, and wages, while trainees can also use lottery tuition assistance for apprenticeship programs. Participating employers qualify for income tax credits.

3. Utilities

The development and expansion of infrastructure is one of the most significant challenges to future economic growth in Oconee County. The location, timing, and pace of new infrastructure impacts the ability of Oconee County to service new and existing employers. To maximize the economic benefit of costly investments in infrastructure, the County and its municipalities must maintain a coordinated process for planning and prioritization of capital facilities and infrastructure needs. The County's infrastructure resources are described in greater detail in the *Community Facilities, Transportation, and Priority Investment Elements*.

Industrial recruitment efforts generally center on sites and communities where water and sewer are either already available or can be extended at reasonable expense. Public water



systems provide service throughout the more densely populated area of the County. Most of the public water is provided by systems owned by the municipalities of Salem, Seneca, Walhalla, and Westminster, all of whom serve areas outside their municipal boundaries. Pioneer Water District also provides service to a large area in southern Oconee County. The Oconee County Joint Regional Sewer Authority provides sewer service throughout the 'triangle' formed by the cities of Seneca, Westminster, and Walhalla. Although the Authority owns the treatment plant and trunk lines, the collection lines are owned and maintained by the municipalities. Recent expansions have provided sewer service to areas in the southern part of the County along the I-85 corridor slated for industrial use, including the Golden Corner Commerce Park.

Access to large capacity electric service, natural gas and other utilities is essential for most new and expanding industrial, commercial, and institutional employers. Duke Energy and Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative provide electricity to the majority of the County. City-owned Westminster Utilities serves its residents and businesses, while Seneca Light and Water provides power to customers in and near the City. Fort Hill Natural Gas Authority provides natural gas service in Oconee County.

Reliable telecommunications access is also requisite for businesses to compete beyond the regional and state levels in national and international markets. AT&T and other wireless carriers provide telephone service, while both Northland and Charter Cable offer cable television service to the areas near the municipalities. Broadband internet service is available in many parts of the County, though currently not accessible in more rural areas. Oconee County built a backbone optical fiber network necessary for carriers to initiate service in most areas. The County has partnered with the private sector to build upon the public investment in this network to extend the reach of broadband access in the County. OneTone Telecom is the primary partner in this effort, as discussed in more detail in the *Community Facilities Element*.

4. Transportation

Commercial transportation is critical for business and industrial development in today's global economy. Although size and space needs for new businesses and industries can vary widely among employer types and sectors, an accessible transportation infrastructure that provides easy access to materials, supplies, and markets is a common requirement. Convenient connectivity to areas nationwide and overseas is an attractive incentive for businesses and industries, making freight mobility a high priority when considering transportation infrastructure investments. Depending on industry-specific needs, this infrastructure network can include interstates and highways, aviation facilities, rail service, and ports.

The County has nearly nine miles of direct frontage on Interstate 85, with four interchanges. U.S. Highways 123 and 76 traverse the County, as well as South Carolina Highways 28, 183, 130, 59, and 11. Of the 1,700 miles of roads in the County, more than 1,000 are federal and state highways maintained by the State of South Carolina. These transportation corridors open



employment, shopping, and recreation opportunities to residents and provide workers with access to employers.

Rail service offers a cost-effective option for manufacturers that require bulk raw materials and shipment of finished products. Oconee County is bisected by the main Norfolk Southern rail line that links Charlotte, North Carolina with Atlanta, Georgia. The line provides direct access to the County's Seneca Rail Park.

Located between Seneca and Clemson, the *Oconee County Airport* offers a 5,000 foot runway, GPS navigation systems, and general aviation support services and amenities that can accommodate the needs of smaller recreational aircraft as well as larger turboprops and business jets. Commercial passenger service for domestic and international flight connections is accessible at the *Greenville-Spartanburg International Jetport* (GSP) within an hour drive. Six major airlines serve more than 2.3 million passengers through an average of 50 non-stop flights to 19 major airports daily. GSP handles 60,000 tons of cargo annually and is the site of a 120,000 ft² FedEx cargo facility. The *Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport* (ATL) is a two-hour drive to the west. As the world's busiest airport, ATL provides international and domestic flights to more than 100 million passengers each year to 150 domestic and 75 international destinations. Both airports offer significant air freight capacity that includes large shipping distribution facilities.

Traditional port service for Oconee County businesses is available through South Carolina seaports at terminals in Charleston and Georgetown. The *Port of Charleston* ranks as one of the busiest container ports on the East coast and provides the primary port service for State businesses. The facility handles 2.2 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) annually, while moving 760,500 tons of breakbulk cargo. A deepening project now underway will make Charleston the deepest harbor on the east Coast by 2020. The first *South Carolina Inland Port* opened in Greer in 2013, extending the Port of Charleston's reach more than 200 miles inland to the Upstate. The inland port provides access to more than 95 million consumers a day and boosts intermodal efficiency for international freight movements between the Port of Charleston and companies located across the Southeast.

Additional details on Oconee County's transportation resources are presented in the *Priority Investment and Transportation Elements*.

5. Environmental Considerations

The preservation of natural and environmental assets is an aspect of sound economic development. Clean air and water are essential to a desirable quality of life and public health in Oconee County. Air quality problems that trigger non-attainment measures can ultimately impede the recruitment of new industries and businesses to the area, resulting in reduced investment and employment opportunities. All South Carolina counties currently have attainment status with the national ambient air quality standards of the U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency. Given the County's location adjacent to the high-growth Greenville-Anderson-Mauldin metropolitan area, it is important that local leaders continue to analyze and monitor the factors related to air quality as they influence the County's long-range economic health and potential.

Oconee County has abundant surface water resources that include Lakes Hartwell, Jocassee, and Keowee, and numerous rivers, creeks, and streams. These resources provide a critical natural habitat for countless numbers of plants and animals, as well as energy generation and recreational opportunities. The County also relies on both surface and ground water from local sources to accommodate residential, commercial, and industrial need. The quality of these water resources is integral to future economic development efforts. Ongoing water quality concerns include increased levels of sedimentation, bacterial and chemical contaminants, and turbidity, along with decreased levels of dissolved oxygen. Increased urbanization and population growth can contribute to rising levels of point source and non-point source pollution. This will increase demands on the water supply and elevate the protection of both ground and surface water resources as a long-term priority. Attention to stormwater retention, percentage of impervious surfaces within developments, and industrial discharge are critical to ensuring water quality in Oconee County. Detailed data on water quality in the County is provided in the *Natural Resources Element*.

Agriculture and forestry are important components of the landscape and the economy of Oconee County. As noted in the *Agriculture Element*, more than half of the County's land area is currently in use for agriculture or forestry. Such lands are critical natural resources that provide valuable wildlife habitat, windbreaks, enhanced water quality, groundwater recharge areas, decreased ambient temperatures, stormwater and erosion mitigation, and open space. Preserving important farmland and forests requires economic strategies that focus on areas suitable for growth and discourages intensive development in the County's environmentally sensitive areas.

6. Energy Conservation

Energy conservation influences all aspects of the local economy. A balanced discussion of energy use and conservation must include industrial and commercial interests, as well as large-scale institutional uses. Industrial and commercial uses combined account for well over half (58%) of all energy consumption in South Carolina (*S.C. Energy Office, 2019*). The industrial sector is the State's largest energy user at 45% of all energy consumed. The transportation sector consumes the second largest amount of energy at 28%, while commercial users consume 13%.

Table 4-17 provides a listing of federal and state incentive programs for commercial and industrial businesses to encourage energy efficiency. Nearby Clemson University also operates an Industrial Assessment Center that provides energy assessments to small and medium-sized industrial facilities statewide at no cost.



Table 4-17. Federal and State Energy Conservation Incentives for Businesses

Available Incentives	Source	
	Federal	State
Business Energy Investment Tax Credit (ITC)	✓	
Energy-Efficient Commercial Buildings Tax Deduction	✓	
Renewable Electricity Production Tax Credit (PTC)	✓	
Energy Efficiency Revolving Loan		✓
Alternative Fuel Vehicle (AFV) Revolving Loan Program		✓
Alternative Fuel Vehicle and Infrastructure Financing		✓
Alternative Fuel Project Grants		✓
Alternative Fueling Infrastructure Tax Credit		✓
Battery Manufacturing Tax Incentive		✓
Biofuels Production Facility Tax Credit		✓
Biofuels Distribution Infrastructure Tax Credit		✓
Biomass Resource Tax Credit		✓
Biomass Energy Production Credit		✓
Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Tax Exemption		✓
Idle Reduction Weight Exemption		✓
Natural Gas Vehicle (NGV) Weight Exemption		✓
Solar Energy System Tax Credit		✓

Source: S.C. Energy Office, 2019

7. Industrial Development Sites

Adequate land area and suitable sites are necessary to provide space to accommodate new and expanding business and industry. Planning is needed to ensure the long-term availability of sites that minimize development constraints and potential conflict with surrounding uses. Land targeted for industrial development should be provided with the necessary infrastructure in advance to attract new employers.

Oconee County has four interchanges along an 8.6 mile segment of the Interstate 85 corridor that runs through the southern tip of the County. Economic development strategies emphasize the potential of an industrial corridor in this southern portion of the County. The Golden Corner Commerce Park and four of the eight industrial sites are located in this area (Tables 4-18 and 4-19).

Table 4-18. Oconee County Industrial Parks

Park	Acres*	Features	Location
Oconee Industry & Technology Park	180	Site of new Oconee Workforce Development Campus that will include TCTC Campus and SDOC Career & Technology Education Center	Westminster
Golden Corner Commerce Park	260	Located on I-85; Closest S.C. park to Atlanta, GA	Fairplay
Seneca Rail Park	83	Offers direct rail access	Seneca

*Available, developable acres remaining
 Source: Oconee Economic Alliance, 2019

Sensible growth strategies encourage the development of land closer to existing development, provide incentives for infill and the redevelopment of previously developed areas, and avoid encroachment of new development into areas that lack the necessary public facilities, services, and infrastructure. The use of vacant buildings to house new business and industry supports this strategy. These facilities can range from former strip commercial centers to big box retail and abandoned mills. Often referred to as *greyfields*, these properties generally consist of a large structure with significant land area. These sites represent infill opportunities that do not require the expansion of new infrastructure and are convenient to existing transportation networks and housing markets. Table 4-19 lists currently available industrial facilities and sites that take advantage of existing infrastructure and accessibility.

Table 4-19. Oconee County Industrial Buildings and Sites

Site/Building	Size	Acreage	Type	Community
Dunlop	200,000 ft ²	44 acres	Bldg	Westminster
Jacobs Road	135,910 ft ²	14 acres	Bldg	Seneca
Stamp Creek	30,000 ft ²	6 acres	Bldg	Salem
Fairplay Boulevard	N/A	46 acres	Site	Fairplay
I-85 Exit 2	N/A	46 acres	Site	Fairplay
Grubbs Road	N/A	18 acres	Site	Fairplay
Morgan Site	N/A	20 acres	Site	Townville

Source: Oconee Economic Alliance, 2019

8. Economic Development Strategies and Focus Areas

Over the last decade, South Carolina has increasingly shaped its economic development strategy around target industries as part of a long-term economic strategy that aims to foster growth and raise the State's per capita income to the national average. Clusters, targets, and specialty sectors have been identified in multiple State and regional studies. These targets are used to identify areas for collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries that combine public and private investment to promote growth within each region.

Statewide economic growth potential is focused on the Advanced Manufacturing, Advanced Materials, Aerospace, Agribusiness, Automotive, Distribution & Logistics, Life Sciences, and the Office/Shared Services sectors. For the ten-county region that includes Oconee County, the Upstate SC Alliance has identified five targeted sectors in Aerospace, Automotive, Engineered Materials, Food Manufacturing, and Life Sciences (Table 4-20). At the County level, the Oconee Economic Alliance (OEA) seeks to build a vibrant economy by focusing on four related industry targets in Advanced Manufacturing, Automotive, Metal Fabrication, and Plastics Injection Molding.

4-20. Economic Development Target Industry Clusters

Target Sector	Description	South Carolina	Upstate Alliance	OEA
Advanced Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides 11% of the State’s non-farm employment Prevalent in Oconee County, with sector employers that include BASF, Greenfield Industries, Sandvik, ACI Plastics, Vermont NDT, and Lift Technologies 	✓		✓
Advanced/ Engineered Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cluster includes metal working and fabrication, technical textiles, plastics, innovative polymer and advanced composites, optics, metals, chemicals, and ceramics Upstate cluster has 883 businesses with 40,384 employees Oconee employers in this sector include BASF, Baxter, U.S. Building Innovations, CRM Global, Sealed Air, and CollinsCraft 	✓	✓	
Aerospace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual statewide economic impact of more than \$19 billion Upstate has 38% of State’s aerospace employers Oconee sector employers include RBC Aerostructures and ITT 	✓	✓	
Agribusiness/ Food Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encompasses traditional agriculture and forestry, food production, wood processing, and ancillary support Statewide economic impact of \$41 billion and more than 68,000 direct jobs Annual output of \$26 billion (9% of the State total) with a 23% growth rate over the last decade Recent Oconee additions include Keowee Brewing and Jocassee Valley Brewing 	✓	✓	
Automotive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes all aspects of automotive manufacturing - parts suppliers, assemblers, and raw material producers Sector quadrupled in size over the last 2 decades to reach an annual economic impact of \$27 billion S.C. is national export leader of completed passenger vehicles and ranks 1st in production and export of tires Automotive manufacturing has a strong presence in Oconee County that includes BorgWarner, U.S. Engine Value, Koyo Bearings, Parkway, Baxter, and Horton. 	✓	✓	✓



4-20. Economic Development Target Industry Clusters, *Continued*

Target Sector	Description	South Carolina	Upstate Alliance	OEA
Bioscience/Life Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Biotechnology and pharmaceutical bulk manufacturers, healthcare, medical devices, chemical processors, generic and proprietary pharmaceutical developers, hygiene product producers and packagers, and related research and development ▪ Annual statewide economic impact of \$11.4 billion ▪ County advantage with proximity to Clemson University and cutting-edge research and innovation ▪ Local sector employers include Oconee Memorial Hospital (Prisma Health) and Ulbrich Precision 	✓	✓	✓
Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oconee County offers a convenient location with extensive transportation infrastructure including rail, Interstate 85, and Inland Port at Greer ▪ County distribution facilities include Perry Ellis, Clarios, and International Kitchen Supply 	✓		✓
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus on mechanical and electrical components for renewable energy technologies, nuclear energy industry components, and electrical distribution systems ▪ Oconee employers include Duke Energy, Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative, Itron, Ulbrich, ITT, and Schneider Electric. 			✓

Sources: S.C. Department of Commerce, Upstate SC Alliance, and Oconee Economic Alliance, 2019

In addition to these targeted manufacturing sectors, Oconee County can diversify its economic base with development of agribusiness and tourism, with support for small business development and downtown revitalization.

As described in the *Agriculture Element*, agriculture and forestry continue to be an integral part of the South Carolina and Oconee County economy. A 2013 joint study released by the South Carolina Departments of Agriculture and Commerce, *Making Small Farms into Big Business*, identified the development potential of *food nodes*. A *food production node* is a cluster of farms near each other, working in collaboration and using common food production infrastructure. Strengthening these clusters of independent farms presents an opportunity for South Carolina communities to maintain a sustainable agriculture system and build local efficiencies in food trade. Savings in fuel and energy costs make local producers more attractive as suppliers to regional markets. The continued growth in consumer interest and demand for organically grown produce and livestock also creates new markets for smaller farming operations.

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture, along with the Palmetto AgriBusiness Council and the Farm Bureau, implemented the *50 by 20 Plan* that calls for increasing the economic impact of the State's Agribusiness cluster to \$50 billion by the year 2020. As part of this effort, a growing number of South Carolina and Oconee County farmers are looking beyond traditional agricultural markets to find new opportunities and markets that diversify their operations through agritourism. Agriculture-based tourism includes farm tours and field trips, farm to table dinners, on-the-farm restaurants with markets, on-farm workshops, festivals and u-pick



operations. The State Department of Agriculture offers multiple agribusiness initiatives to support the growth and sustainability of local farmers throughout the State through market expansion and increased profitability. These programs are outlined in the *Agriculture Element*.

Strategies that protect agricultural uses and productive agricultural and forest lands are necessary to maintain profitable farms. The agribusiness strategy strongly complements revitalization efforts to strengthen existing urban centers in the County and reduce encroachment into prime farmlands and forests. Recruitment efforts can also seek industries that use locally grown products or by-products for value-added production. The County has established an Agriculture Advisory Board with responsibility for representing the interests and needs of the agricultural sector. The Board advises the County on issues ranging from land use to the promotion of agritourism.

The same abundant natural resources that support agriculture can also serve as a major tourist draw. The recreation and tourism sector also plays an important role as a provider of jobs and income in many South Carolina communities, both large and small. The economic impact of tourism in South Carolina is significant, supporting one in ten jobs statewide in a \$22.6 billion industry that now accounts for nearly three percent of the State GDP (*U.S. Travel Association, 2019*). Domestic travelers to the State spent more than \$12 billion on transportation, lodging, food, entertainment, recreation, and incidentals. Sector spending also generated \$1.7 billion in State and local tax revenue. This equates to a tax burden transfer from residents to tourists of \$895 per household.

Oconee County benefitted from more than \$64 million in travel and tourism related expenditures, with \$3.3 million in local tax revenues, in 2017. This activity ranked Oconee among the top half of South Carolina counties in total travel expenditures (*SCPRT, 2018*). Tourism generated nearly \$10 million in local payroll. Tourism employment includes numerous sectors such as public and auto transportation, lodging, food service, entertainment and recreation, and general retail. Tourism-related jobs offer opportunities for residents with diverse skills and educational backgrounds, ranging from first-time job seekers to senior citizens and from part-time work to alternative work schedules.

A new tourism development plan for Oconee County was completed and adopted in 2015. The Plan, *Destination Oconee: Realizing the Future of Oconee County*, outlines recommendations for tourism, growth policies, branding, funding, and marketing for the County and its communities. The initial recommendations addressed a variety of needs that ranged from downtown street audits and design review ordinances, to overlay districts, coordinated signage, and ongoing support of tourism projects. These efforts will strongly complement the County's overall economic development goals by diversifying the local economic base, enhancing and preserving the County's rich cultural and natural resource base, strengthening existing downtowns, and providing increased job opportunities for area residents through the creation of locally-owned, small businesses.



As tourist activity increases, downtown development and revitalization initiatives continue to gain momentum in the Upstate. Rural communities with attractive cultural, scenic, and historical resources are among the fastest growing heritage tourism destinations. As identified in the *Cultural Element*, local governments, cultural and civic organizations, and the private sector can play a valuable role in providing recreational, cultural, and entertainment opportunities that enhance the sense of community for residents, attract tourists, and boost activity in traditional downtown districts. Economic development efforts in downtown districts typically focus on encouraging retention of existing businesses, facilitating the location of new businesses that strengthen the downtown, and promoting the revitalization and infill of commercial areas. Among the strategies to revitalize and strengthen these historic commercial centers are policies that preserve and promote the unique nature of the downtown area, along with its key buildings, streets, and public spaces. This includes the redevelopment of blighted structures and properties, streetscaping, and the installation of wayfinding signage that facilitates identification and access to neighborhoods and businesses. These are among the key recommendations of the *Destination Oconee Plan* for the County and its municipalities.

The Plan defines a unified brand that promotes the County. This character is derived from the County's physical location at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains and the distinct Appalachian heritage of the community. Each municipality has potentially unique commercial areas, such as Ram Cat Alley in the City of Seneca. As the County seat, the City of Walhalla provides a focal point for creating a vibrant arts and outdoor recreation destination that carefully weaves together business, cultural, and governmental uses. Neighboring Westminster also offers an emerging music and arts scene combined with welcoming small-town charm. Community festivals, museums, visual and performing arts venues, complemented by dining and lodging options, can strengthen the draw of these historic communities.

In addition to creating jobs and boosting downtown revitalization efforts, tourism provides new small business opportunities that enable County residents to capitalize on its natural, recreational, and historic assets. For example, the 2018-2022 *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (CEDS) for the six-county Appalachian Region of South Carolina notes that smaller Upstate communities such as Westminster have limited lodging options for visitors. The plan calls for increased collaboration and incentive to establish options such as bed and breakfasts, short-term rentals, and RV parks.

Small business development strategies are an integral part of local economic development plans. More than half of the State's private sector employees work for small businesses. A distinct advantage of smaller firms is that they are locally-owned and typically employ residents within the local community, do business with other community-based firms, and reinvest profits within the community. Small business development can also provide alternative employment for residents impacted by downsizings and plant closures. Small businesses also tend to be more diverse with higher levels of minority, veteran, and women ownership. Smaller firms are well-positioned to serve the larger corporations recruited to the region, opening new opportunities for small business start-ups.



Local government support for downtown entrepreneurs can include financial incentives for qualifying businesses, physical site improvements, advertising, signage, and other marketing needs. Municipalities can also simplify permitting and remove barriers for new and existing businesses to obtain or renew business licenses to facilitate downtown economic activity. Rehabilitation and reuse of older buildings generally has a higher local economic multiplier than new construction, keeping more dollars in the community.

9. Organizations and Partnerships

The involvement of public and private organizations as economic development allies in the development process supports a sound economic growth strategy that addresses community needs and advances the County's economic vision. Economic allies include municipal, State, and County organizations involved in planning, finance, education and training, construction, utilities, and engineering, as well as related regional and State economic resources (Table 4-21). This continued partnership approach to economic development will fuel Oconee County's a diverse economic base that supports economic and community development and provides a quality living environment for residents.

Table 4-21. Oconee County Economic Development Allies

Economic Partner	Role
Oconee Economic Alliance (OEA)	Public-private nonprofit tasked with accelerating job creation and capital investment, increasing per capita income, diversifying the local tax base and generating greater awareness of Oconee County as a business location.
Oconee County Industrial Group (OCIG)	Collaboration of industrial base representatives countywide with a focus on information sharing, benchmarking, and support of workforce development initiatives that will help the local economy prosper. Membership is limited to plant managers or their designees.
Tri-County Entrepreneurial Development Corporation (TCEDC)	Local volunteer non-profit emphasizing entrepreneur development by offering expert training and on-one-one mentorship to new and existing businesses. Certified SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) Mentors work closely with Tri-County Tech, Clemson SBDC, and the Oconee Economic Alliance to offer free business counseling and a free monthly Business Start-Up Workshop. Operates the Oconee Business Center (business incubator) in Walhalla.
Oconee County Chamber of Commerce	Private, non-profit that promotes a positive business climate in the market areas of Fair Play, Long Creek, Mountain Rest, Salem, Seneca, Walhalla, West Union and Westminster. Partners with area business leaders and the School District to offer Leadership Oconee, special events, and educational and networking opportunities. Small Business Council offers mentoring programs to facilitate small business startups and foster growth with existing businesses.
Upstate SC Alliance	Coordinates growth of domestic and international investment through market research, economic impact and labor analysis, community profiles, project administration, site identification, product development, domestic and international marketing missions, incentive facilitation, new and existing industry assistance, corporate relocation assistance, and event coordination for the ten-county region that includes Oconee.



Table 4-21. Oconee County Economic Development Allies, *Continued*

Economic Partner	Role
Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG)	Voluntary organization of local governments serving the six-county region of Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg counties, as well as 42 municipalities. Coordinates the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Appalachian Region that is used as the basis for federal economic investment and workforce development funding.
Appalachian Development Corporation (ADC)	Organized to further economic development, job creation and retention and financially assist in the growth and development of business in six Upstate counties. Provides technical assistance and funding through the Appalachian Loan Fund to businesses located in Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens and Spartanburg and other Upstate counties in conjunction with the U.S. Small Business Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)	Federal-state partnership that builds community capacity and strengthens economic growth in 420 counties across the 13 Appalachian states. Strategic plan identifies five goals to advance this mission: creating economic opportunity; preparing a ready workforce; building critical infrastructure; leveraging natural and cultural assets; and cultivating leadership and community capacity. <i>Oconee is designated as a transitional county by the ARC for economic development.</i>
South Carolina Research Authority/SC Launch	Public, non-profit that supports the innovation economy by accelerating technology-enabled growth in research, academia, entrepreneurship and industry. Supports start-ups with early-stage funding through SC Launch, an independent, non-profit corporation providing grants, loans, investments and mentoring support to participating state-based companies aligned with Information Technology, Life Sciences or Advanced Manufacturing and Materials sectors. Two two participating industries in Oconee County.
S.C. Division of Small and Minority Business Contracting and Certification	Links minority and women-owned small businesses to State contracting and procurement opportunities. Services include one-on-one consultation, training, potential vendor lists, participation reports, and dispute resolution. Sponsors the SC Launch program with acceleration assistance for fledgling companies.
South Carolina Innovation Hub	Online tool that provides individual entrepreneurs and businesses within the technology sector a platform to access and connect with resources.
S.C. Manufacturing Extension Partnership (SCMEP)	Private, non-profit resource for small to mid-size South Carolina businesses to improve their competitiveness through hands-on consulting and training services and competitiveness reviews.
Clemson Regional Small Business Development Center (SBDC)	Statewide network of business training and counseling centers for prospective and existing businesses.. Entrepreneurial services include marketing analysis, managerial and technical assistance, business plan preparation, feasibility studies, and seminars at little to no cost. Specialized programs are offered to veterans, women, and young entrepreneurs, along with government contracting, export assistance, and manufacturing ventures technology commercialization. Clemson is the closest SBDC location for Oconee County residents and businesses.
Upstate Carolina Angel Network (UCAN)	Group of Upstate accredited investors who invest in start-up and early-stage, high growth businesses in the Southeast. UCAN has invested more than \$5.6 million in 22 companies since 2008.
Worklinks Workforce Development Area (SCWorks)	State office providing employer assistance in hiring qualified workers, labor market information, job skills assessment and placement, and employment training programs for youth, seniors, veterans and other special populations.

E. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The table of goals, objectives and implementation strategies (GOIS) summarizes the actions that will be undertaken in the coming decade to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the Economic Element.

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Goal 4.1. Increase the County's tax base through a thriving and diversified economy.		
Objective 4.1.1. Strengthen Oconee County as an employment center.		
<u>Strategy 4.1.1.1.</u> Maintain economic incentives for new and expanding industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • SC Dept. of Commerce 	2021
<u>Strategy 4.1.1.2.</u> Maintain communication with existing business and industry to assess the local business climate, public services, workforce quality, and potential areas for improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Industrial Group (OCIG) • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce 	Annually
<u>Strategy 4.1.1.3.</u> Continue to develop the I-85 industrial corridor with associated infrastructure to support fully utilized industrial parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Utility Providers • Upstate SC Alliance • SC Dept. of Commerce 	Annually
<u>Strategy 4.1.1.4.</u> Promote the inventory of industrial sites and buildings in Oconee County with an emphasis on vacant and certified industrial sites and parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • SC Dept. of Commerce • ACOG 	2025
<u>Strategy 4.1.1.5.</u> Recruit new industry to the County and assist in expansion of existing employers in the target sectors of advanced manufacturing, biosciences, automotive, and energy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • SC Dept. of Commerce 	Annually
<u>Strategy 4.1.1.6.</u> Continue to support the Oconee Economic Alliance as the primary entity to represent the County and pursue industrial development with broad-based public and private representation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • SC Dept. of Commerce 	Annually
Objective 4.1.2. Balance support for retention, expansion and recruitment of businesses.		
<u>Strategy 4.1.2.1.</u> Strengthen relationships and partnerships among the County, civic organizations, municipalities, educational institutions, service agencies, and the private sector to support economic development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Chamber of Commerce • OCIG • School District of Oconee County (SDOC) • Tri-County Technical College (TCTC) 	Annually



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<u>Strategy 4.1.2.2.</u> Maintain a formalized business and retention program (BRE) dedicated to existing employers in Oconee County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • OCIG • Municipalities 	2025
<u>Strategy 4.1.2.3.</u> Conduct annual visits and tours of County industrial facilities to establish and maintain rapport and working relationships with existing businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • OCIG • Workforce Development Partners 	Annual
<u>Strategy 4.1.2.4.</u> Develop and coordinate positive economic and business messages and case studies and marketing for local, regional, and national media outlets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • OCIG • Employers • Media 	2025
Goal 4.2. Improve the skills, productivity, and economic competitiveness of the Oconee County workforce.		
Objective 4.2.1. Increase employer satisfaction with workforce readiness.		
<u>Strategy 4.2.1.1.</u> Align workforce development and training programs with economic development efforts to include targeted industries, current and projected workforce needs and provide robust apprentice and internship opportunities in a wide variety of County businesses and industries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC • TCTC • WorkLinks • ApprenticeshipSC • Employers • Clemson University 	2023
<u>Strategy 4.2.1.2.</u> Work to improve the completion rate including alternative credit sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDOC 	Annually
Objective 4.2.2. Raise incomes and earnings potential of the County workforce.		
<u>Strategy 4.2.2.1.</u> Increase the number of jobs with higher than average County wages and demand outlook.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • SC Dept. of Commerce 	Annually
<u>Strategy 4.2.2.2.</u> Prepare Oconee County graduates and residents for high demand, higher wage careers and occupations, equipping them with the training and education to apply their skills in a broad and diverse economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC • TCTC 	2021
<u>Strategy 4.2.2.3.</u> Increase access to local employment opportunities that can reduce overall commuting distance and costs for residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Upstate SC Alliance • SC Dept. of Commerce 	2021
<u>Strategy 4.2.2.4.</u> Support and promote the continued expansion of the consolidated Oconee County Workforce Development Center Campus at the Oconee Industrial and Technology Park to include Tri-County Technical College and the new School District Career Center.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC • TCTC • Business/Industry 	2023

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Strategy 4.2.2.5. Add defined career pathways for existing and projected opportunities in sectors including advanced manufacturing, automotive, healthcare, entrepreneurship, retail, hospitality, and biosciences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDOC • TCTC • Workforce Development Partners 	2025
Strategy 4.2.2.6. Leverage corporate giving by employers for academic, career, and cultural enrichment programs that raise college and work readiness of County students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate and Community Foundations • SDOC • TCTC 	2025
Goal 4.3. Increase business and commercial activity in priority areas.		
Objective 4.3.1. Strengthen downtown commercial districts.		
Strategy 4.3.1.1. Promote the development of downtown retail and commercial niche markets in Seneca, Walhalla, West Union, Westminster, and Salem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Oconee County • Chamber of Commerce 	2025
Strategy 4.3.1.2. Promote policies that preserve and promote the unique nature of downtowns, key buildings, streets, and public spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Oconee County 	Annually
Strategy 4.3.1.3. Identify and inventory commercial and industrial infill and greyfield sites throughout the County and prioritize for reuse and redevelopment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Oconee County 	2023
Strategy 4.3.1.4. Explore local incentives for location of businesses and industries in existing properties and the use of infill properties such as tax or fee reductions or zoning incentives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Oconee County 	2025
Strategy 4.3.1.5. Establish a county-wide loan pool, in partnership with area banks, focused on downtown revitalization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Oconee County • Chamber of Commerce 	2023
Objective 4.3.2. Foster a climate of entrepreneurial activity and small business success.		
Strategy 4.3.2.1. Support small business start-up and expansion and assist in clearing key steps in the development and start-up process to include permitting and inspections, licensing, and eligibility for State and local incentives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Small Business Development Center (SBDC) • Chamber of Commerce • Tri-County Entrepreneurial Development Corporation (TCEDC) 	Annually
Strategy 4.3.2.2. Establish and maintain local business incubation capabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SBDC • Clemson University • Chamber of Commerce • TCEDC 	Annually



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Strategy 4.3.2.3. Support efforts to expand the reach and economic impact of the <i>Think Oconee</i> buy local campaign throughout the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Chamber of Commerce 	Annually
Strategy 4.3.2.4. Explore the benefits of <i>Certified Connected Community</i> status.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Utility Providers • Telecommunication Providers 	2025
Strategy 4.3.2.5. Identify projects and promote Opportunity Zone incentive areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021
Objective 4.3.3. Leverage the County’s cultural, historic, agricultural, and natural resources as economic assets.		
Strategy 4.3.3.1. Continue implementation of the <i>Destination Oconee</i> plan objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2023
Strategy 4.3.3.2. Capitalize on the local traditional arts, culture, and heritage of the County as an economic opportunity for small business development, downtown revitalization, and tourism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Chamber of Commerce • Arts and Cultural Groups • Festival and Event Organizers 	2025
Strategy 4.3.3.3. Support economic development activity that leverages the assets and strengths of the County’s rural areas to include agribusiness and agritourism, outdoor recreation, heritage tourism, and eco-tourism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SBDC • Chamber of Commerce • TCEDC 	2023



Chapter 5. Cultural Resources Element

Cultural resources include historic buildings and structures, unique residential and commercial areas, archeological sites, entertainment venues and events, museums, art galleries, educational and religious institutions, and related features that comprise the unique attributes and defining character of Oconee County and its communities. The Cultural Resources Element generates awareness and consideration of historical, archaeological, and heritage issues. It also provides an overview of the historical development of the County, identifies significant historic and cultural resources, profiles local arts and cultural organizations, lists annual events and opportunities, and explores the current and potential economic impact of these resources in the community.

Preservation and enhancement of the County's abundant historic and cultural resources directly benefit the community through increased tourism activity and revenue, revitalization of core commercial and residential districts, higher property values, stronger community identity, and enhanced attractiveness to new employers and residents. The ability of Oconee County to attract and retain visitors, retirees, and professionals rests in large part on the quality of life offered by a rich historic and cultural resource base.

A. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The history of Oconee County has been extensively documented through many publications including *Oconee County* (1998) by Piper Peters Aheron and *Historic Oconee in South Carolina* (1935) by Mary Cherry Doyle. The Oconee County Heritage Book Committee also compiled *The Heritage of Oconee County, 1868–1995* in 1995. The Oconee History Museum and the Oconee County Library maintain reference copies of most of these publications.

Oconee County is nestled in the northwest corner of South Carolina between the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Chattooga and Tugaloo rivers. Its name is rooted in the Cherokee word translated as “land beside the water.” Although the first inhabitants of the area were the Creek and Cherokee, early European settlement in the area began in the late-eighteenth century with the construction of a militia outpost at the colonial frontier. Named Oconee Station, the post served as a military compound and later as a trading post.

Through multiple treaties following the American Revolution, the Cherokee were displaced from most of the area, as more settlers moved west. Oconee County was carved out of the western portion of the Pickens District in 1868. Walhalla, founded nearly two decades earlier by German settlers, was designated as the new County seat.

Agriculture was the dominant economic activity of the area until the westward expansion of rail service in the late nineteenth century. The new communities of Seneca, Westminster, and Newry were products of the extension of rail access to the region. The arrival of the railroad also facilitated the development of the textile industry that would remain a major employer well into the twentieth century.



Following the Second World War, major infrastructure projects prompted additional changes in the County's economy. The construction of the national Interstate system included a segment of Interstate 85 in the southeastern corner of the County, opening both industry and resident access to new opportunities in surrounding counties and neighboring states. A series of dam projects for power generation resulted in the creation of Lakes Hartwell, Keowee, and Jocassee. In addition to producing the energy to support growth in the region, these new lakes became valuable recreational assets.

B. HISTORIC RESOURCES

Small towns and rural communities with attractive cultural, scenic, and historical resources are among the fastest growing heritage tourism and retirement destinations. The historic and cultural resources of Oconee County and its communities contribute to the appeal of the area as a retirement destination, a desirable place to work and live, and a growing tourist destination. These local resources warrant special consideration in the comprehensive planning process to protect their unique character from development pressures and neglect. Protection of the County's historical and architectural resources requires an active partnership among public and private property owners, local governments, and State and Federal agencies.

1. National Register Listings

South Carolina has more than 1,400 listings in the National Register, with 160 historic districts statewide. The *National Register of Historic Places* is the nation's official list of historic and cultural resources formally deemed worthy of preservation. Authorized by the *Historic Preservation Act of 1966*, the National Register is the foundation of a national effort to identify, evaluate and protect irreplaceable architectural and archeological resources. Under the oversight of the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Register listing includes buildings, structures, districts, sites and objects that qualify as significant in the context of American history, architecture, engineering, culture and archaeology. The benefits of National Register listing include wide recognition of a property's significance, consideration and review in the federally-assisted project planning process, eligibility for federal tax benefits for rehabilitation and easements, and eligibility for federal and state historic preservation grants.

National Register listings can be achieved for larger *historic districts* that contain broader areas of multiple historic properties that have collective significance, for *individual* properties that meet the criteria, and for *landmark* sites that represent historical significance at a level greater than local and regional interest.

Historic districts can be designated to protect larger areas of historic properties and landscapes from adverse impacts of development. National Register criteria for historic districts require that the majority of the components that comprise a district's historic character have integrity, though alone they may be individually undistinguished. There are currently four designated historic districts in Oconee County. Table 5-1 profiles these historic districts shown on Map 5-2. Although



each historic district has multiple contributing properties, there are also numerous individual National Register sites located outside of these districts (Table 5-2 and Map 5-2).

Table 5-1. National Register Districts in Oconee County

ID	District	Significance	Listed
D1	Newry Historic District	Turn of the century textile mill village built between 1893 and 1910 in the Little River Valley. Contains 118 properties including the Courtenay Mill complex, mill office, company store, post office, village church, and workers residences. Located within a 250 acre area. A typical New England textile factory design attributed to W.B.S. Whaley.	1982
D2	Oconee State Park District	Product of Great Depression era efforts of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to protect natural areas through park construction while providing job opportunities for unemployed American men. Contains 63 contributing and 60 non-contributing resources arranged around a man-made lake. Includes vacation cabins, bathhouse, central administrative building, two residences and two picnic shelters.	2004
D3	Ram Cat Alley Historic District (Seneca)	Example of architectural and commercial development around the growth of the railroad in a small South Carolina town. Intact public, commercial, and social center, consisting of 21 commercial buildings in downtown Seneca. Eighteen contributing buildings constructed from 1887 to 1930.	2000
D4	Seneca Historic District (Seneca)	District is made up of two areas that include three churches and 20 homes in a variety of architectural designs which produce a cohesive and homogenous unit. Included are examples of late 19 th century domestic architecture, pre-World War I dwellings, mid-1920s houses, and church architecture of the first half of the 20 th century. Architectural styles include Victorian, Classical Revival, Bungalow, Tudor Revival, and Four-Square.	1974 and 1987

Source: National Register of Historic Places, 2019

Table 5-2. National Register Sites in Oconee County

ID	Property/Site	Significance	Listed
S1	Alexander-Cannon-Hill house (Seneca)	Provides an upcountry pioneer architectural link between the present and Old Pickens. Built in 1831 on a plantation at the edge of Old Pickens, the house was moved to its new location in 1972 to conform to Atomic Energy Commission regulations. Acquired by Duke Power in the 1960s.	1972
S2	Ellicott Rock (Salem)	Inscribed in 1813 as part of survey to settle a state boundary dispute. Recognized as the fixed common corner of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Located on the east bank of the Chattooga River.	1974
S3	Faith Cabin Library (Seneca)	Significant for its role in African American education and social history in South Carolina. Constructed in 1937 with support of Oberlin College, it is one of only two remaining free-standing Faith Cabin Libraries in the State and the only remaining building from the Seneca Junior College campus.	2012
S4	Keil Farm (Walhalla)	Antebellum farm house (ca. 1850) symbolizing the role of a German immigrant family in the settlement and development of Walhalla and Oconee County. Consists of frame farm house and six outbuildings.	1998
S5	Long Creek Academy (Long Creek)	Opened in 1914 by the Beaverdam Baptist Association as part of a system of mountain mission schools overseen by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.	1987



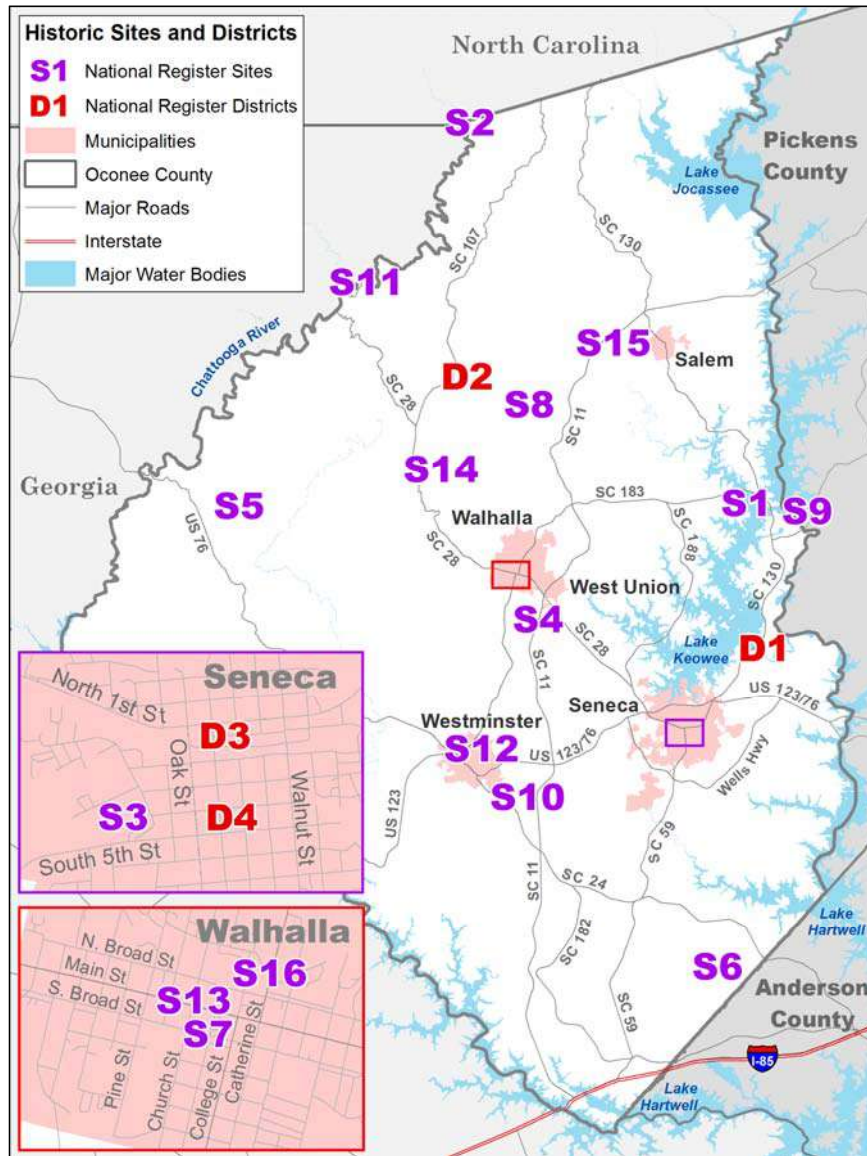
Table 5-2. National Register Sites in Oconee County, *Continued*

ID	Property/Site	Significance	Listed
S6	McPhail Angus Farm (Seneca)	Established in 1902, the farm complex illustrates 20 th century developments in South Carolina upcountry agriculture. Site includes eight contributing properties and more than 140 acres of terraced fields.	2007
S7	Oconee County Cage (Walhalla)	One of several <i>Jails on Wheels</i> used in the early 20 th century as quarters for chain gang members at work sites. The small, metal cage on a wheeled chassis was constructed around 1900.	1982
S8	Oconee Station (Salem)	Building marks the farthest point in South Carolina to which white settlers ventured before the Revolution. Erected before 1760 as a military outpost to protect settlers. Used by the Cherokee as a trading post in the early 1800s. Includes the adjacent Richards house, constructed in 1805.	1971
S9	Old Pickens Presbyterian Church (Seneca)	Intact example of a mid-nineteenth century church built in the meeting house style and constructed of brick. Also significant for its association with the town of Pickens Court House (Old Pickens) and as the only remaining building from the old town site. A cemetery containing more than 200 marked graves is adjacent to the church.	1996
S10	Retreat Rosenwald School (Westminster)	Significant for its association with African American public education during the first half of the 20 th century. Built in 1924 as one of ten Rosenwald Schools in Oconee County, serving as an important public educational and social center for rural blacks.	2011
S11	Russell House & Farmstead (Mountain Rest)	Constructed after 1867 as a stage stop and inn. Although the house burned in 1988, the complex includes ten agricultural outbuildings representative of a small, turn of the century Appalachian farmstead. Outbuildings include log barn ruins, spring house, outhouse, garage, corn crib, and potato cellar.	1988
S12	Westminster Depot (Westminster)	The Southern Railway passenger station (ca. 1885) is one of the town's oldest buildings. The station served as a community gathering place and activity center.	1976
S13	St. John's Lutheran Church (Walhalla)	Constructed between 1859 and 1861 for the German Lutheran congregation of Walhalla. Significant both for its German vernacular church form and for its role in the religious and organizational history of Walhalla. The site includes a brick Sunday School building and a church cemetery with the earliest gravestone dating to 1851.	1980
S14	Stumphouse Tunnel Complex (Walhalla)	Site includes 40 acres of land, two acres of water, Stumphouse Mountain Tunnel, Middle Tunnel, the 385-foot original railroad bed, picnic and camping areas, and a museum of railroad history. As part of the 1850s Blue Ridge Railroad project, the tunnels were planned as a final link in a shipping route from the Mississippi to the Atlantic seaboard. Stumphouse is also the site of the first successful attempt to age blue cheese in the South by Clemson University in the 1950s.	1971
S15	Tamassee DAR School (Tamassee)	Associated with the history of education in the rural northwestern corner of South Carolina and as one of only two schools in the nation created by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). Opened in 1919 for children of poor rural families, the site includes 44 contributing and 11 noncontributing buildings, sites, and structures dating from 1919 to 1960.	2012
S16	Walhalla Graded School (Walhalla)	Example of an educational building in the Classical Revival style and significant for its role in the educational development of Oconee County. The facility is comprised of a 1902 graded school, a 1913-14 auditorium and east wing addition, and a 1950s classroom addition, built on the temporary site of Newberry College.	1992

Source: National Register of Historic Places, 2019



Map 5-1. Oconee County National Register Districts and Sites



Source: Oconee County, 2019

2. Historical Markers

Historical markers give recognition to places, people, events, and structures that have historical significance at the local, state, or national level. The South Carolina Department of Archives and History manages the *South Carolina Historical Marker* program. The program includes 1,500 markers statewide, with 19 in Oconee County (Table 5-3). These markers recognize diverse sites of historical significance throughout the County that include schools, churches, and Native American settlements. Although the Department must approve the content of all markers and their location must be coordinated with the S.C. Department of Transportation, there is no state funding for the signs. Markers must be sponsored and purchased by civic, church, historical, or educational organizations.



Information provided by Oconee Heritage Center staff indicates that there are additional locations in Oconee County that should be inventoried for historical purposes and possible inclusion in the official State Historical Marker program.

Table 5-3. State Historical Markers in Oconee County

Marker ID	Marker Name
37-1	First Soil Conservation District Plan
37-2	St. John's Lutheran Church
37-3	The Cherokee Path
37-4	Seneca
37-5	Replaced by Marker 37-11
37-6	Capt. Samuel Earle
37-7	Oconee County Training School
37-8	Seneca Institute
37-9	Newberry College
37-10	Stumphouse Tunnel
37-11	Keowee Town
37-12	Oconee Town
37-13	Cherokee Boundary (1777)
37-14	Jocassee Town
37-15	English School
37-16	Chattooga Town
37-17	Cross Roads Baptist Church/Cross Roads School
37-18	West Union Grammar School
37-19	Tamassee DAR School
37-20	Retreat Rosenwald School
*	Chauga Town
*	Cheohee Town
*	Tamassee Town
*	Veaverdam Baptist Church

* Marker numbers not available

Sources: S.C. Historical Marker Program database, 2019; Oconee Heritage Center, 2019

4. Archaeological Resources

As defined by the S.C. Department of Archives and History, an archaeological site is an area yielding three or more historic or prehistoric artifacts within a 30-meter radius and/or an area with visible or historically recorded cultural features such as cemeteries, rock shelters, chimney falls, brick walls, piers, and earthworks. Due to the sensitive nature and wealth of information that can be gained over time from careful study of these sites, locations are typically not publicly disclosed.

Such sites on federal or tribal lands or that are potentially impacted by federally funded projects are protected to a limited degree by the *Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979*, the *Native American Graves and Repatriation Act of 1990*, *Executive Order 13007* of 1996, and the



Department of Transportation Act of 1966. At the State level, multiple laws and regulations protect archeological resources including the *South Carolina Mining Act*, the *South Carolina Underwater Antiquities Act*, the *South Carolina Water Resources and Planning Act*, as well as various State codes related to abandoned cemeteries and burial grounds. The State has also developed *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Investigations* as an advisory framework for archaeological fieldwork and reporting in the state of South Carolina.

Archeological sites can be particularly fragile and vulnerable to development. Most sites are discovered during the land development process, especially road construction. The County and its municipalities should work to protect and preserve known sites, as well as identify and protect additional potential areas of archaeological significance.

Archaeological site excavations have been conducted on a number of sites in Oconee County including Fort Prince George, Tamassee Town, Chattooga Town, Chauga Mound, Tugaloo Mound, and Oconee Town. Relics from these excavations have been placed with various institutions throughout the southeast, but are available to be loaned to local museums.

5. Cemeteries

Cemeteries are a significant historical resource in every community and can be an important repository for social, religious, artistic, genealogical, and cultural heritage. There are nearly 100 cemeteries in Oconee County, ranging in size from small family plots to historic church cemeteries and memorial gardens. More than 70 cemeteries in Oconee County have been inventoried by the U.S. Geological Survey and included in the federal Geographic Names Information System (GNIS). Among these historic locations are the Mountain View, Oak Grove, and Lumpkin Street cemeteries in Seneca, the St. John's Lutheran Church cemetery in Walhalla, and the Old Pickens Presbyterian Church cemetery north of Seneca. The website of the Oconee County Cemetery GPS Mapping Project contains most cemetery information including aerial views, map coordinates and directions, and links to photos and tombstone texts. The the Old Pendleton District Genealogical Society also maintains the *Oconee Cemetery Survey Books*, however there have been few updates to the survey books in recent decades. In recent years online resources such as findagrave.com have become useful resources to assist in keeping local cemetery listings up-to-date.

The South Carolina Department of Archives and History provides a reference guide for individuals and groups who are interested in the preservation and protection of historic cemeteries (*South Carolina's Historic Cemeteries: A Preservation Handbook, 2007*). Vandalism, development, and neglect are the biggest threats to these historic resources. Cemeteries are protected by several State laws that address the preservation and protection of cemeteries (*S.C. Code 6-1-35*), access and relocation of cemeteries (*S.C. Code 27-43-10*), and destruction or desecration of remains (*S.C. Code 16-17-600*). However, enforcement of State laws pertaining to cemeteries rests with local law enforcement. The *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966* also provides some protection to cemeteries that are eligible for or listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



6. Unique Areas and Scenic Corridors

Numerous unique areas and corridors showcase the history, culture, and geography of Oconee County. In addition to scenic views, these routes feature historically and culturally significant sites and the unspoiled, diverse natural character of the County. The *Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway* is also a *National Scenic Byway* that extends 112 miles along S.C. Highway 11, while the *Savannah River Scenic Highway* (S.C. Highway 24) forms part of the *South Carolina National Heritage Corridor* that extends 320 miles from the mountains of Oconee to Charleston. This Heritage Corridor offers a cross-section of the State's history, culture, and natural landscapes by showcasing the evolution of regional life, from plantations and farms to mill villages and urban centers. As a spur of the Falling Waters National Scenic Byway, the *Oscar B. Wigington Scenic Highway* (S.C. Highway 107) is only 20 miles long and offers spectacular mountain views from the North Carolina border to Oconee State Park. These corridors and other scenic areas are detailed in the *Natural Resources Element*.

7. Historic Preservation Organizations

State and local agencies and nonprofit organizations assist South Carolina communities in maintaining their local character by preserving historic and cultural landmarks. The *South Carolina Department of Archives and History* (SCDAH) preserves and promotes the documentary and cultural heritage of the Palmetto State through archives and records management, history education, and historic preservation. Housed in the SCDAH, the *State Historic Preservation Office* (SHPO) facilitates the responsible stewardship of South Carolina's irreplaceable historic and prehistoric places. The SHPO is responsible for implementing the goals of the *National Historic Preservation Act*, as well as programs to assist local communities with preservation efforts. Support includes coordination of the *Statewide Survey of Historic Properties* to identify and evaluate historic resources, nomination of eligible resources to the National Register of Historic Places, management of the *South Carolina Historical Marker* program, administration of the *Certified Local Government* (CLG) Program, and review of projects involving Federal and State funds, licenses, permits and certifications.

The *South Carolina Institute for Archeology and Anthropology* (SCIAA) maintains the official inventory of discovered archeological sites in the State. The SCIAA was established in 1963 with the mandate to create and maintain a statewide inventory of archeological sites and ensure the adequacy of archeological research and archeological investigations carried out in the State of South Carolina. The SCIAA serves as the lead State agency concerned with South Carolina's Prehistoric and Historic Archaeology.

The nonprofit *Palmetto Conservation Foundation* was founded in 1989 to conserve South Carolina's natural and cultural resources, preserve historic landmarks, and promote active outdoor recreation on the Palmetto Trail and other greenways. As detailed in the *Natural Resources Element*, three sections of the Palmetto Trail have been completed in Oconee County to date with the Stumphouse Passage, the Oconee Passage, and the Eastatoe Passage.



The *Oconee County Arts & Historical Commission* is a county supported organization that funds annual cultural and art events. The *Oconee History Museum* is a nonprofit organization focused on the preservation and promotion of the history and cultural heritage of Oconee County through museums, programs, and historic sites.

8. Historic Preservation Planning

Land use, transportation, and zoning decisions can critically impact historic preservation efforts. Communities that plan ahead to preserve historic properties and districts have a greater likelihood of success. South Carolina law allows local jurisdictions to enact zoning provisions that preserve and protect the character of a community. These communities can enact historic preservation ordinances that contain specific procedures and standards for designating historic properties and districts, design guidelines, and a process for reviewing proposed changes to historic properties. The focus of such ordinances is on preserving the appearance, rather than the use, of identified historic properties. The City of Seneca adopted a design review ordinance and guidelines in 2000 to further its historic preservation goals.

9. Historic Resource Funding Opportunities

Incentive programs encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings and the donation of conservation easements to protect historic sites. Although Federal and State resources to support historic preservation efforts have been limited in scope and funding, there are a few opportunities available to property owners and local governments for historic preservation efforts (Table 5-4).

Table 5-4. Summary of Federal and State Tax Incentives for Historic Preservation

Incentive	Benefit Summary	Eligibility	Level
20% Federal Historic Rehabilitation Credit	Federal income tax credit equal to 20% of rehabilitation costs	Income-producing use such as offices, stores, or rental housing with individual or contributing National Register (NR) status	Federal
10% State Historic Rehabilitation Credit	State income or license tax credit equal to 10% of rehabilitation costs	Same as federal credit above and does not require separate state application process	State
10% Federal Rehabilitation Credit	Federal income tax credit equal to 10% of rehabilitation costs	Non-residential income-producing use for buildings in service before 1936 that do not have individual or contributing NR status	Federal
25% State Historic Rehabilitation Credit	State income tax credit equal to 25% of allowable rehabilitation costs for exterior, structural systems, energy efficiency, HVAC, plumbing, electrical	Owner-occupied residence with individual NR status or as contributing to historic district or historic outbuilding associated with an eligible residence	State



Table 5-4. Summary of Federal and State Tax Incentives for Historic Preservation

Incentive	Benefit Summary	Eligibility	Level
Federal Income Tax Incentives for Easement Donations	Income and estate tax deductions	Owner-occupied residence or income-producing building with individual or contributing NR status	Federal
Tax Incentives for Rehabilitating Textile Mill Buildings	Credit against local property taxes <i>or</i> a State income tax credit equal to 25% of rehabilitation costs	Rehabilitation and reuse of former textile manufacturing facilities	State
Federal Income Tax Credit for Low Income Housing	Credit to rehabilitate historic buildings for low income housing and rental units	Low Income Housing Credits allocated by S.C. Housing Finance & Development Authority	Federal State
Local Property Tax Special Assessment	Property is assessed on the pre-rehabilitation fair market value for the length of the special assessment for up to 20 years	Income-producing real property and owner-occupied property are eligible for buildings designated as historic by NR or local government	Local

Source: S.C. Dept. of Archives and History, 2019

Eligible projects can combine Federal, State, and local credits with one or more other local incentives resulting in even greater benefit. The *Bailey Bill* was passed by the State legislature to allow South Carolina cities and counties to provide property tax incentives for improvements to historic structures.

The SCDAH also offers two matching grant programs with funds from the National Park Service for *Survey and Planning* and *Stabilization Projects*. However, only Certified Local Governments (CLG) are eligible for grant consideration. *Survey and Planning Grants* can be used for identifying and recognizing historic properties, planning for historic districts, strengthening local government preservation programs, preservation education, and planning for individual historic properties. *Stabilization Project Grants* are used for stabilization repairs to National Register buildings, including roofs, structural framework, and deteriorated doors and windows. The City of Seneca is among 36 Certified Local Governments in the State and the only CLG in Oconee County.

The *South Carolina National Heritage Corridor* provides technical support to communities throughout a fourteen-county region that extends from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Oconee County to the Atlantic Ocean at Charleston and Colleton Counties. Designated by Congress as a “national heritage area” in 1996, communities along the Heritage Corridor are eligible for funding from the National Park Service for projects that enhance their natural, cultural, and historic resources. Oconee County has received grants for historic preservation and destination way-finding signage through this program.

C. CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resources envelop the broad spectrum of the heritage, the traditions, the religions, and the arts of a community. Participation and awareness of the arts can significantly enrich the quality of life for residents. Partnerships among schools, libraries, arts and civic groups, churches,



higher education, and local business and industry can leverage local cultural opportunities to increase exposure to the arts for residents of all ages and backgrounds.

1. Cultural Facilities

Cultural facilities are buildings and places where cultural programs are housed and provide public access points for the arts. Oconee County has a diversity of cultural venues for residents and tourists that include numerous museums, a library system with four locations, a fine arts center, a performing arts center, and a community theater.

a. Museums

Oconee County is home to many museums that carefully preserve the diverse cultural heritage of the County and its communities, as well as the contributions of its residents. These facilities are profiled in Table 5-5.

Table 5-5. Oconee County Museums

Museum	Significance	Location
Bertha Lee Strickland Cultural Museum	Focuses on the rich history, culture, and contributions of local African-Americans in Oconee County history.	Seneca
General Store Museum	Branch of the Oconee History Museum displaying a vast collection of artifacts from the historic England's General Merchandise store of Westminster, with local history exhibits, antique toys, clothes, glassware, medical equipment, photos and other items unique to the area.	Westminster
Lunney House Museum	Listed on the National Register, this California style bungalow was built in 1909 by Dr. and Mrs. W.J. Lunney and occupied continuously by the Lunney family until 1969. Offers distinctive arts and crafts architecture, along with a collection of Mission and Victorian furniture, period costumes, and Oconee County historic memorabilia.	Seneca
Museum of the Cherokee in South Carolina	Promotes the study of the history and legacy of the Cherokee in the Upstate of South Carolina. Housed in an historic building built in 1905, the museum seeks to create a stronger understanding of the rich history of the State in relation to the Cherokee and their interaction with non-native cultures.	Walhalla
Patriots Hall (Oconee Veterans Museum)	Tells the story of the contributions and sacrifices of Oconee County veterans for our country, the world, and our freedom. Built in 1933 by the Civilian Conservation Corps, the two-story museum honors the service of veterans through military artifacts, documents, photographs, and artwork supported by the personal stories of Oconee County veterans. The facility includes a "Walk of Honor" to recognize individuals and groups, along with a library and gift shop.	Walhalla



Table 5-5. Oconee County Museums

Museum	Significance	Location
Oconee County History Museum	Explores the diverse history and cultural heritage of the County amid the influences of Native Americans, agriculture, railroads, immigration, New Deal programs, textile mills, and more. An exhibit hall offers a self-guided tour of local history with artifacts that include preserved dugout canoes, a walk-in Stumphouse Tunnel exhibit, and a Depression-era tenant farmer's house. The Louise Russell Alexander Children's Corner engages children in local culture and heritage.	Walhalla
Oconee Station	Originally a military compound and later a trading post, the site offers a unique look at 18 th and 19 th century South Carolina. The stone blockhouse and the William Richards House are the only two structures that remain on the site.	Oconee Station
World of Energy	Operated by Duke Energy, the hands-on, self-guided facility on Lake Keowee portrays the electrical generation process. With interactive models, the high-tech center reveals how three reactors interact to generate electricity for the Upstate. The facility is also a popular venue for meetings and public activities. Opened in 1969, the center is the longest continually operating nuclear visitor's center in the world.	Oconee Nuclear Station

b. Libraries

High quality library facilities, programs, and services can enhance, enrich, entertain, and educate residents of all ages, while presenting opportunities for life-long learning and fostering cultural understanding. The *Oconee County Public Library* was established in 1948 in Walhalla by County ordinance. The first branch locations were added in Westminster in 1950 and in Salem in 1952. The Seneca branch followed closely in 1953. The system also provides monthly bookmobile service to outlying rural areas that are more than 1.5 miles from a library. The Library system is managed and directed by a Board of Trustees consisting of nine members appointed by the County Council. The system had 44,959 registered patrons, with a circulation of 317,126 and 225,158 visitors in 2018.

The system plays a vital role in promoting genealogical research, computer and internet access, and early and adult literacy through programs such as preschool story time, adult book clubs, and summer reading programs. The local history and genealogy collection is housed in the Antoinette "Ann" Rogers Memorial Room of the main library in Walhalla. The collection includes microfilm of local newspapers, as well as local histories, family histories, cemetery records, and a small collection of local historical maps. As part of the State Library's *Digitization in a Box Initiative*, the Oconee Library is digitizing books, pamphlets and other documents that relate to aspects of Oconee County history. Many of these are works by local authors, which were originally published in very small editions and are no longer available for sale in a print version. Access to e-books and downloadable audio is also available, along with online access to thousands of magazines, newspapers, and reference books. To encourage STEM (Science, Math, Engineering



and Technology) learning opportunities for area teens, the library has introduced a telescope lending program and 3D modeling software and printing services. Other community events held at the libraries are family movie nights, children and teen craft workshops, and writing contests.

c. Fine and Performing Arts Centers and Related Community Facilities and Programs

Although Oconee County remains largely rural, it boasts a number of cultural resources that serve to both educate and enrich the lives of its residents and visitors. These resources provide an educational component that generally includes classes, workshops, field trips, and classroom outreach for persons of all ages.

The *Walhalla Performing Arts Center* strives to provide a world-class facility for performances, conferences, and special events to enhance the cultural and social life of Upstate South Carolina. The Arts Center is supported with funding from the South Carolina Arts Commission, the Oconee County Accommodations Tax (ATAX) Committee, the City of Walhalla, and private foundations and contributions. The Center is located in the Walhalla Civic Auditorium that was built as a grade school in 1903 and is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The current facility is the result of a restoration effort launched in 1993 by the Walhalla Auditorium Restoration Committee. The auditorium was reopened with an inaugural performance in 2003. The facility features beautifully restored palladium windows, a decorative tin ceiling, and original hand planed woodwork and stair railings constructed by skilled German craftsmen.

The *Westminster Music Centre* is a non-profit, community focused music venue that hosts the region's finest musicians, artists, and performers in an intimate setting with a professionally designed sound system. In partnership with the City of Westminster, the Centre sponsors *Music on Main*, a live downtown music performance held on the first Friday of each month from April through September. The Centre is governed by the volunteer Westminster Music Association with the shared goal of fostering downtown awareness, tourism, and vitality by attracting local, regional, and out-of-town patrons to quality musical performances and events at the Music Centre.

The *Gateway Arts Center* of Westminster seeks to make a wide variety of art, history, and culture accessible to people of all ages and from every walk of life. The Center is an all-volunteer art exhibit and education organization that relies entirely on donations, grants, and fees. The community is engaged in the arts through public participation events that are offered free of charge alongside formal exhibits and classes.

The *Oconee Community Theatre* presents diverse plays and dramatic works to promote and encourage local interest in theatrical productions. Local actors are showcased in several productions each year. The Theatre is managed by a nonprofit organization created in 1971, operated with the hard work of dedicated volunteers, and has been housed in the Utica School in Seneca since 1989.



The *Upstate Heritage Quilt Trail* (UHQT) preserves and promotes the history of the Upstate through the local tradition of quilt making and sharing the stories of those who made them. Oconee County was the first county in South Carolina to embrace the quilt trail concept. Today, there are more than 200 quilts on display along the route that extends through Oconee, Anderson, and Pickens Counties. Through the display of quilt patterns on hand-painted panels, the region's homes, barns, churches, community buildings, and historic sites participate in showcasing the colorful stories and generations of craftsmanship that contribute to this County's rich quilt making history.

The *Young Appalachian Musicians* (YAM) program was launched in 2010 at the Oconee History Museum. The program is a subsidiary of *Preserving Our Southern Appalachian Music* (POSAM) based in neighboring Pickens County. A variety of classes are offered for area youth in traditional Appalachian musical instruments including guitar, mandolin, banjo, clawhammer banjo, dulcimer, and fiddle. Students learn in a group setting with instruction in tablature and playing by ear.

The *Blue Ridge Arts Center* is committed to "Bringing Art to the People and People to the Arts." Located in the historic district of Seneca and housed in a former church that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Center offers opportunities for artist exhibitions and gallery shows. Classroom studio space allows members and the community to participate in art classes, painting groups, artist demonstrations, events, and meetings. The Center also houses an art library with art reference books, videos, and instructional materials in various mediums. Outreach efforts to place art into the community have included public murals, park benches, and the Alley Cat "sCATenger Hunt" that features steel, laser-cut cats that have been painted by local artists and "hidden" throughout downtown Seneca for residents and visitors to discover. The Arts Center is maintained by the *Blue Ridge Arts Council*, a non-profit organization that works to expand understanding, awareness, and participation in the arts in Oconee County.

Additional public and private facilities are available for cultural programming throughout the County. These facilities host a variety of events including community performances, private functions, and productions.

2. Annual Festivals and Special Events

Local governments, cultural and civic organizations, and the private sector can play a valuable role in providing recreational, cultural, and entertainment opportunities that enhance the sense of community for residents, attract tourists, and boost activity in traditional downtown districts. Oconee County communities and organizations host numerous festivals and special events throughout the year for the enjoyment of residents and visitors. These festivals and entertainment events feature activities from music to bike rides that promote the heritage and scenic resources of the region (Table 5-5).

Table 5-5. Annual Festivals and Special Events in Oconee County

Event	Location	Date	Activities
Isaqueena's Last Ride	Various	April	Offers a challenging mountain ride through the Blue Ridge Mountains and S.C. Foothills with 100, 80, 60 and 30 mile route options
Jazz Fest	Seneca	April	Three-day music festival in Ram Cat Alley in downtown Seneca
Jazz on the Alley	Seneca	April -Oct	Thursday night live music and street party in Historic Ram Cat Alley
Wheels in Westminster	Westminster	April	Car show
Westminster Bluegrass Jam	Westminster	April	Live performances of Bluegrass musicians
Seneca Fest	Seneca	May	Memorial Day Weekend festival featuring music, movies, and food
Rally in the Valley	Walhalla	May	Features bicycle rides of 30 or 60 miles through the scenic foothills of the Blue Ridge, with post-ride live music and barbecue
Cinco de Mayo Celebration	Seneca	May	Celebration of Mexican culture with food, piñatas, music, dancing, and shopping in Ram Cat Alley
Long Creek Music Festival	Long Creek	May	Three day music festival over Memorial Day weekend with music, crafts, and food vendors
Fun in the Sun	West Union	June	Live music, food, and vendors
Hillbilly Day	Mountain Rest	July 4	Showcases traditional bluegrass music, clogging, fiddle and banjo competitions, greased pig chase, BBQ
Cruzin' on Main	Seneca	Summer	First Saturdays celebration offering music, food and classic car show
South Carolina Apple Festival	Westminster	Labor Day week	Celebrates the beginning of apple season in Oconee County, the State's largest apple producing area
Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair	Westminster	Sept	Concerts, livestock shows, rodeos, dance exhibitions, 4-H youth events, hands-on learning opportunities, and farm animal exhibits
Road Titans 300	Oconee County	Oct	Three-day cycling challenge that offers a 150-mile and 300-mile route through scenic Oconee County.
Tour de Tugaloo	Tugaloo River	Oct	Offers 22, 42, 62 and 100 mile route options along the Tugaloo River Corridor, Lake Hartwell and the foothills of Western S.C.
Oktoberfest	Walhalla	Oct	Celebrates local German heritage with traditional food, music, dancing, craft vendors, and recreation

Source: Upcountry South Carolina; Oconee County Chamber of Commerce, 2019

3. Arts and Cultural Organizations

Arts and culture play an important role in shaping community identity and civic pride, as well as providing economic opportunities for creative residents. Community members connect with art and one another when they attend and take part in music, dance, and theater performances, tour architectural sites and art exhibits, share works of literature, and engage and express themselves through electronic and digital media. Oconee County has a thriving creative sector



that includes local writers, artisans, and musicians. The County has active arts groups in areas including drama, music, and folk arts such as quilting.

The arts are easily integrated into strategies that improve the community livability. A recent report on the economic impact of the arts in South Carolina reveals that the arts cluster supports 115,000 jobs statewide, generates \$269 million in tax revenue, and contributes more than \$9.7 billion to the State's economy (*South Carolina's Arts-Related Economic Cluster, 2018*). SCPRT reports that more people visit locations for cultural and heritage activities than for festivals or outdoor recreation.

A wide range of agencies and organizations at the national, state, and local levels provide technical and funding support for artists and arts and cultural initiatives. The ***National Endowment for the Arts*** (NEA) was established by Congress in 1965 to give Americans the opportunity to participate in and experience the arts. The NEA awards project-based funding through multiple grant programs that support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for individuals, states, and communities across the country.

The NEA funds the ***South Carolina Arts Commission*** (SCAC), a state agency tasked with advancing and promoting excellence in the arts and a thriving arts environment in South Carolina. The work of SCAC is focused in the three areas of arts education, artist development, and community arts development. SCAC offers grant programs for individual artists, arts organizations, and schools. SCAC grants to organizations provide funding for operating support, presenting and performing arts, arts education, folklife and traditional arts projects, and accessibility. Funding assistance to individual artists includes artist fellowships, arts apprenticeships, and artist ventures, as well as arts project support. SCAC grants assistance to schools supports arts education for students, teacher standards implementation, and the *Arts in Basic Curriculum Advancement* program to make the arts an integral part of the basic curriculum and daily classroom instruction.

As one of the largest funders of humanities programs in the United States, the ***National Endowment for the Humanities*** (NEH) seeks to promote excellence in the humanities and convey the lessons of history to all Americans. At the State level, the mission of the nonprofit ***South Carolina Humanities*** is to enrich the cultural and intellectual lives of all South Carolinians by increasing public understanding of and support for the humanities. Both organizations offer multiple grant programs. While NEH grants typically go to larger cultural institutions such as museums, archives, libraries, colleges, universities, public television, and radio stations, recipients of state grants have included local libraries, individual schools, churches, civic groups, and community historical and arts councils. South Carolina Humanities provides major grants, mini and planning grants, fast track literary grants, and council program grants.

4. Educational Institutions

Communities that promote a philosophy of lifelong learning among residents are better positioned to successfully compete in a global economy and benefit from a more engaged citizenry. Arts education and music programs are provided to more than 10,400 students each



year through the *School District of Oconee County*. The School District supports a countywide arts education program that includes high school chorus, guitar and piano classes, orchestra/strings program, art exhibits, theatre, visual arts, music appreciation and theory classes, and symphonic, concert and marching bands.

The most recent Strategic Plan for the District incorporates the goal of expanding “arts awareness, appreciation and experiential programs, along with arts-infused instructional approaches.” Strategies to advance this goal include partnering with other community arts groups to expand the *Artists in Residency* and *Arts on the Green* programs, as well as the Young Appalachian Musicians program.

5. Related Venues

Oconee County has several agricultural tourism sites and facilities that strongly complement its historic, arts, and cultural resources. In addition to supporting the County’s agricultural economy, agritourism attractions showcase the cultural and historical traditions of the community. A number of local farms have looked beyond traditional markets to diversify their operations through agritourism, incorporating farm tours and field trips, dinners, on-site farm-to-table restaurants with markets, workshops, festivals, and u-pick operations. These operations are detailed in the *Agriculture Element*.

6. Religious Institutions

The faith community played an important role in the early development of Oconee County and its communities. The more than 200 churches and faith communities of various denominations in Oconee County are vital partners in broadening community access to cultural opportunities. These institutions continue to have a positive impact on the quality of life by hosting events such as annual community concerts and reunions that preserve community and family histories, maintaining historic cemeteries, providing diverse youth activities and summer camps, and participating in festivals that showcase local food, talent, and crafts.

The faith community is also an essential partner in supporting the County’s benevolent efforts, providing financial and personnel support for a wide range of activities including food banks, daily meal service, a homeless shelter, and a ride to work program. Several churches have combined resources to address the issue of homelessness and provide an outreach effort in the Utica area. The faith community is also leading the renovation of the former detention center that will provide a host of benevolent activities. Churches also often provide day care, preschool, and faith-based private school options for many families.

7. Media

Newspapers, magazines, television, and radio stations can be a key conduit of information about local cultural events and festivals. Although there are no network television stations located within Oconee County, local residents are served by major network affiliate stations based in the Greenville-Spartanburg area. . One company publishes two newspapers in Oconee County. The



Journal is published daily Tuesday through Sunday, and The Journal Limited is a free publication available weekly. Of the six radio stations based in the County, four are in Seneca, one is in Westminster, and one in Walhalla. Three of the stations broadcast country music, one contemporary religious programming, one adult contemporary music, and one urban contemporary.

8. Cultural Tourism

Tourism has grown to a \$22.6 billion industry in South Carolina, accounting for nearly three percent of the State GDP (*U.S. Travel Association, 2019*). Tourism now supports one in ten jobs statewide. Domestic travelers to the State spent more than \$12 billion on transportation, lodging, food, entertainment, recreation, and incidentals. Sector spending also generates \$1.7 billion in State and local tax revenue. This equates to a tax burden transfer from residents to tourists of \$895 per household.

State data also shows that Oconee County benefitted from more than \$64 million in travel and tourism related expenditures, with \$3.3 million in local tax revenues in 2017. Tourism generated nearly \$10 million in local payroll. This activity ranked Oconee among the top half of South Carolina counties in total travel expenditures. Oconee County received \$406,825 in total accommodations tax allocations for fiscal year 2017-2018, with \$200,070 of the total remaining with the County and \$186,798 going to the City of Seneca, \$7,070 to the City of Walhalla, \$5,496 to the City of Westminster, \$4,253 to the Town of Salem, and \$3,138 to the Town of West Union (*SCPRT, 2018*).

Cultural tourism in particular offers significant economic opportunities for local businesses and residents through the creation of new retail and service markets in the areas of arts and culture, historical tours and sites, genealogy resources, agribusiness, specialty foods, and related products. In addition to visiting historic places and museums during their trips, heritage visitors enjoy shopping, parks, cultural events and festivals, and outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, boating, or biking. Such tourism is an attractive economic development resource for Oconee County as it preserves community character, instills local pride, promotes community investment, improves the overall quality of life, and generates local employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. The continued cooperation of public and private interests in marketing, preservation and revitalization, and programming for cultural tourism will position the County and its municipalities to continue building upon local heritage tourism assets that include historic sites of state and national significance, cultural attractions, festivals, outdoor events, and diverse culinary and retail offerings.

The *South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism* (SCPRT) is a cabinet agency assigned to operate and manage South Carolina's State Parks, market the State as a preferred vacation destination, and provide assistance to local communities for development and promotion of parks, recreation and tourism. SCPRT offers annual grants to support local governments and nonprofits in developing marketing and generating visitors to the state (Table 5-7).



Table 5-7. Cultural and Heritage Tourism Support Opportunities

Grant Program	Summary	Eligibility	Amount
Emerging Destination Marketing	Seeks to generate new visitation through select tourism advertising activities for highly-developed, emerging tourism destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 501(c) non-profit charged with marketing tourism for specific city or unincorporated area 	\$100,000 to \$200,000 (2:1 cash match)
Destination-Specific Tourism Marketing	Supports destination specific advertising that generate a proven economic return for the State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualified tourism partners 	\$250,000+ (2:1 cash match)
Sports Tourism Advertising and Recruitment	Recruits new sporting events that enhance resident quality of life and generate significant economic impact to local communities through additional participant/visitor spending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nonprofit tourism or sports-related organizations, applying through local governments 	Up to \$50,000 (1:1 match)
Tourism Advertising	Expand economic benefits of tourism across the state by providing competitive, matching grant funds to qualified tourism marketing partners for direct tourism advertising expenditures in Festivals and Events, Attractions, and Destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SC tourism regions and organizations engaged in tourism marketing Local government/non-profits attracting out-of-market visitors to destination, event or attraction 	Up to \$100,000 (1:1 and 2:1 match)
Undiscovered SC	Assists communities and nonprofits with development of <i>publicly owned</i> tourism products and attractions that encourage visitation to the State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> County/municipal governments with ATAX distributions of \$550,000 or less 	\$100,000 to \$200,000 (1:1 match)

Source: S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, 2019

The Oconee County Parks, Recreation & Tourism Commission serves as the ***Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee***. The Committee advises Oconee County Council on the expenditures of revenue generated from accommodations tax. Grants are made to local organizations for promotion of tourism related arts and cultural events and the construction, maintenance, and operation of civic and cultural facilities.

Discover Upcountry Carolina Association is designated by the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) as one of the State's eleven official regional tourism development and promotion agencies. Established in 1978, the Association serves Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg Counties. The goal of the Committee is to support efforts that attract tourists from outside the Oconee County area and that generate overnight accommodations. Recent funding has been awarded to festivals, park improvements, and renovation and repair of historic structures.

Visit Oconee SC, formerly the Mountain Lakes Convention and Visitors Bureau, is the destination marketing organization focused on bringing visitors into Oconee County to visit, stay, dine, and shop. Local businesses, restaurants, lodging, arts and cultural events, and recreational



opportunities throughout Oconee County are highlighted through newsletters, social media, and visitor guides.

D. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Cultural resources, activities, and opportunities are prominent and essential elements of community life, contributing to the vibrancy, place, and identity of the County and the quality of life and well-being of its residents. Rural communities with attractive cultural, scenic, and historical resources are among the fastest growing heritage tourism destinations. A concerted effort to preserve and enhance the community’s rich cultural resources base will continue to contribute to the appeal of Oconee County as a desirable place to work and live and as a tourism and retirement destination.

The goals, objectives and strategies for implementation (GOIS) table summarizes the actions that will be undertaken in the coming decade to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the *Cultural Element*.

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Goal 5.1. Protect the historic and cultural heritage of Oconee County, as embodied and reflected in its historic structures, sites, and districts.		
Objective 5.1.1. Emphasize the importance of historic and cultural resources in the policies, plans, and ordinances of local governments to ensure that the unique character of the County is preserved and enhanced.		
Strategy 5.1.1.1. Identify and address the protection of historical and cultural resources through County and municipal land use plans and regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2025
Strategy 5.1.1.2. Enhance the visual and aesthetic character of the County and its municipalities using codes enforcement, architectural review boards, and other measures as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2021
Strategy 5.1.1.3. Survey, list, and record the County's archaeological and historical assets, and inventory and add potential sites within the County that have historical and cultural significance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SC Archives and History • Property Owners 	2020



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Objective 5.1.2. Protect local sites, structures and districts which represent or reflect elements of cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history at the community, County, regional and state levels.		
Strategy 5.1.2.1. Promote the on-going improvement and maintenance of property condition and appearance of historic structures and districts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Nonprofits • Property Owners/ Businesses • Neighborhood Associations 	2021
Strategy 5.1.2.2. Encourage the adaptive reuse of historic or architecturally significant buildings that connect the County and its communities with their histories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Property Owners 	2025
Strategy 5.1.2.4. Explore the purchase and adaptive reuse of the Utica Mill site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • City of Seneca • Private Businesses/ Nonprofits 	2021
Strategy 5.1.2.5. Educate the public and businesses on the economic and cultural benefits of historic preservation and available incentives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2025
Strategy 5.1.2.6. Work with the School District of Oconee County School and private schools to establish and deliver programs on historic preservation and community history.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School District of Oconee County (SDOC) • Private and Home Schools 	2030
Goal 5.2. Strengthen countywide access, involvement, and appreciation of the arts.		
Objective 5.2.1. Strengthen the creative capacity of the community by providing all County residents with diverse opportunities for arts participation.		
Strategy 5.2.1.1. Encourage residents to connect with one another and their communities through a strong awareness of and commitment to local history and historic places, as well as a deep appreciation for the arts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC • Museums and Historic Sites 	Annually
Strategy 5.2.1.2. Increase the awareness of Oconee County residents of all ages and income levels in visual, performing, and literary arts, and cultural programming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine/Performing Arts Centers • SDOC • Other Cultural and Arts Groups 	Annually
Strategy 5.2.1.3. Support the School District of Oconee County and community arts groups in maintaining a comprehensive arts program in local schools, including the Arts-in-Education programs to expose students to a lifetime of visual and performing arts, music, and creative writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDOC • Oconee County • Artists and Arts Groups • Employers 	2025



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Strategy 5.2.1.4. Enable residents of all ages to acquire knowledge and skills in the arts by supporting arts projects that address lifelong learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDOC • Cultural and Arts Groups 	Annually
Strategy 5.2.1.5. Promote opportunities for volunteerism and sponsorships of tourism, cultural, and recreational offerings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Cultural Organizations • Businesses/Employers 	Annually
Objective 5.2.2. Strengthen the creative and operational capacity of existing community arts and cultural organizations.		
Strategy 5.2.2.1. Increase local arts funding by supporting arts organizations in federal and state grants applications, as well as corporate and private funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Private Businesses/ Nonprofits 	2030
Strategy 5.2.2.2. Maximize funding from sources including the National Endowment for the Arts, the S.C. Arts Commission, the S.C. Humanities Council and the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Cultural and Arts Groups 	2030
Strategy 5.2.2.3. Continue to support cultural and arts venues through annual appropriation of accommodations tax revenues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2030
Strategy 5.2.2.4. Encourage volunteer involvement in cultural programming, organizations and events by community, faith-based, and civic groups, as well as businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural and Arts Groups • Faith-based Organizations • SDOC • Civic and Community groups 	Annually
Goal 5.3. Leverage the County's historic and cultural assets as an economic development resource.		
Objective 5.3.1. Integrate the County's heritage into the overall economic development process, especially as it relates to building a cultural tourism industry.		
Strategy 5.3.1.1. Maintain and communicate a shared vision and guiding principles for tourism and recreation development in Oconee County among the public and private sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Museums/Arts Organizations • Business Owners • Oconee Chamber of Commerce 	2021



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<p><u>Strategy 5.3.1.2.</u> Increase awareness of the rich genealogical resources in Oconee County as a means to attract additional heritage tourists.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County Museums 	<p>2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 5.3.1.3.</u> Ensure the County's visibility in the regional tourism market to support sustainable tourism development and make the County a destination for cultural enrichment, leisure, entertainment, and the arts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcountry SC Tourism Association • Visit Oconee SC • Oconee Chamber of Commerce • Oconee County 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 5.3.1.4.</u> Recognize, build upon and promote the County's historic and cultural assets with agricultural, Colonial and Civil War, African-American, Native American (Cherokee), and Appalachian themes through local historical and arts institutions and programming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Museums/Arts Organizations • Business Owners • Upcountry SC/Visit Oconee SC 	<p>2025</p>
<p>Objective 5.3.2. Support employers engaged in the cultural and heritage tourism, agritourism, and nature-based tourism sectors.</p>		
<p><u>Strategy 5.3.2.1.</u> Pursue additional SCPRT and other grants for local governments and non-profits to supplement promotional efforts in tourism marketing for festivals, attractions, and events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities • Oconee County • Cultural Organizations 	<p>2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 5.3.2.2.</u> Launch hospitality and tourism sector training and workforce development to support excellence in quality of services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDOC • TCTC • Oconee Chamber of Commerce • Employers 	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 5.3.2.3.</u> Collaborate with the private sector to expand local shopping, dining, and lodging amenities as an important means of capturing tourist dollars.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee Chamber of Commerce • Oconee County • Municipalities • Business Owners 	<p>2021</p>
<p><u>Strategy 5.3.2.4.</u> Preserve the culture and identity tied to agriculture and the landscape of the County's rural communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Farms and Agribusinesses • Land Conservation Groups 	<p>2023</p>



Chapter 6. Natural Resources Element

Located between the Blue Ridge Mountains and lakes Jocassee, Keowee, and Hartwell, Oconee County has abundant natural resources. Residents and visitors have access to lakes, parks and trails, rivers, streams, waterfalls, and forests. These natural resources provide land for development with scenic and environmental amenities, while offering an opportunity for sustainable development. Sustainable development “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (*United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development*). The aesthetic and recreational appeal of natural resources can also increase land development pressures to accommodate both new residents and tourists. The resulting challenge is to achieve a balance in natural resources planning that promotes productive use of land and resources, maintenance of critical ecological functions, and protection of residents and property from natural hazards.

The Natural Resources Element includes information on local geographic and geologic conditions, climate, agricultural and forest lands, plant and animal habitats, unique parks and open space, scenic areas, water resources, wetlands and floodplains, and other factors that significantly impact the natural environment and shape the future development of Oconee County. A thorough assessment of the County natural resources base and incorporation of this information into planning efforts is necessary to avoid depletion or destruction of sensitive, and often irreplaceable, assets. Valuing and investing in efforts to protect and improve the natural resource base supports the quality of life for all County residents.

A. CLIMATE

As part of the South Carolina Upstate, Oconee County enjoys a warm and temperate climate, with an average annual temperature of 55.8 degrees (Table 6-1). Winters are mild, with the earliest freeze or frost occurring between late October and early November and the latest freeze in early April (*S.C. State Climatology Office, 2019*). While local summers are considerably cooler than in southern areas of the State, they can still be quite warm. When combined with an average humidity of 72.64%, the heat index can rise substantially in mid-to-late summer. Winters are also comparatively cooler in Oconee County, with an average low temperature of 43.64 degrees and average snowfall of 3.3 inches – the fourth highest annual snowfall statewide. Moderate temperatures and an average yearly precipitation of 67.4 inches make the County ideal for agriculture, with a growing season that spans more than two-thirds of the year.

Table 6-1. Temperature Summary for Oconee County

Type	Data and State Ranking
Type	Data and State Ranking
Average Temperatures	Annual: 55.8° F (3 rd lowest) ¹ Annual Average Low: 43.64° F (2 nd lowest) ¹ Annual Average High: 67.91° F (3 rd lowest) ¹
Average Humidity	72.64% (12 th lowest) ¹
Average Annual Precipitation	67.44 inches (4 th highest) ¹
Average Annual Snowfall	3.29 inches ¹

Sources: ¹World Media Group - USA.com, 2019; ²Weatherspark.com, 2019



B. AIR QUALITY

Air quality affects the public health, weather, quality of life, and economic potential of a community. Air pollution can have adverse economic effects such as damage to vegetation, reduced crop yields, increased corrosion of metals, and deterioration of stone and paint on buildings, cars and cultural landmarks. These potential impacts are of particular concern in Oconee County where agriculture is an important economic sector and the success of the tourism sector is largely dependent on the preservation of scenic natural resources. Also, air quality problems can impede recruitment of new industries and businesses to the area, resulting in reduced investment and employment opportunities.

One of the primary air quality concerns in South Carolina is ozone. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed and periodically updates the *National Ambient Air Quality Standard* (NAAQS) for Ozone. The EPA designates geographic areas as attainment (meeting the air quality standard) or nonattainment (not meeting the standard) using long-term air quality monitoring data. For areas designated as nonattainment, the State and local governments must prescribe specific actions for reaching attainment within a specified time period. These requirements can significantly impact existing industry, economic recruitment efforts, and transportation in nonattainment and surrounding areas. For instance, the *Nonattainment New Source Review* requirement for areas lapsing into nonattainment status mandates a required level of emission reductions for new and modified industrial facilities. The expansion or improvement of local transportation infrastructure to support development can also be impacted under the Clean Air Act requirement that transportation plans, programs, and projects cannot create new violations to air quality standards, increase the severity or frequency of existing violations, or delay attainment of standards.

SCDHEC maintains a State Implementation Plan (SIP) that outlines the State's strategies for meeting NAAQS standards for six common pollutants as set forth by the Clean Air Act. SCDHEC has operated an air quality monitoring station in Oconee County as part of its air quality monitoring network since 1983. The station is located in the Longcreek area on Round Mountain Tower Road. The location offers a unique vantage point for the continuous monitoring of transported pollutants including ozone, sulfur dioxide, and particulate matter.

As of February 2019, all counties in the State are within the threshold for ambient air quality and are designated as attainment. However, increased urbanization in the nearby Greenville-Anderson-Mauldin metropolitan area may have future impacts on the air quality in Oconee County. As part of the broader region, it is important that local leaders analyze and monitor the factors that contribute to higher ozone levels and develop local solutions to maintain acceptable levels that ensure the health of residents, as well as the economic health of the County.

Oconee County joined SCDHEC, the EPA, and the counties of the Appalachian Council of Governments Region in an 8-hour *Ozone Early Action Compact* (EAC) in 2002. The regional EAC was part of a statewide effort that included all ten council of government regions and resulted in



an early action State Implementation Plan. Under the terms of the EAC, participants worked together to develop and implement local, regional, and state action plans to attain the EPA's 8-hour ozone standard by the end of 2007. The EAC was a success, with all counties in the region meeting attainment status by the target date.

Oconee County was also a participant with nine other counties, the U.S. EPA, and SCDHEC in a collaborative effort to develop a multi-pollutant, risk-based air management strategy for the Upstate South Carolina region that began in 2013 (*U.S. EPA, 2016*). The goals of the plan were to identify local emission reduction measures, maintain compliance with NAAQS, demonstrate selected strategies to reduce population risk from exposure to pollutants, transition to a multi-pollutant air quality management strategy, and foster greater collaboration. The project results were published in 2016 and demonstrate that improving air quality in areas already attaining air quality standards can yield significant health benefits.

C. LAND RESOURCES

Oconee County is bordered by Pickens County to the northeast, Anderson County to the southeast, the state of North Carolina to the north, and the state of Georgia to the west. The County covers more than 626 square miles, ranking 26th largest among the State's 46 counties. More than 47 square miles of the County are comprised of water, primarily Lake Jocassee, Lake Keowee, and Lake Hartwell, along with numerous rivers, streams, and ponds. The Chattooga and Tugaloo Rivers form the County's northwestern and southwestern borders, respectively.

1. Soils

Local soil conditions are an important consideration in planning for future development. Soil properties directly influence building construction and costs, roads and other improvements, prevalence of prime agricultural lands and activities, and the location and design of septic tanks and drain fields. Both soil suitability and stability should be examined when considering the feasibility of new development or significant redevelopment of a site. Soils on individual sites also determine suitability for specific types of development such as low density residential (single-family), high density residential (multi-family), commercial, and industrial. Although this level of detail must be determined by an individual soil survey for the particular site, large-scale soils data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Data Mart may be useful in an examination of future development potential for broader areas and districts within a community.

Oconee County general soil series primarily consist of well-drained soils of varying slope (*USDA, Soil Data Mart, 2019*). These soils are profiled in Table 6-2, with distribution illustrated in Map 6-1.



Table 6-2. General Soil Series within Oconee County

Soil Name	Slope Range	Percentage (Acres)	Characteristics
Pacolet-Hiwassee-Cecil	30-45%	28.9% (122,263)	Well drained, moderately permeable soils
Tusquitee-Tallapoosa-Saluda-Evard-Edneytown	60-95%	14.2% (60,067)	Well drained, moderately to moderately rapidly permeable soils
Hiwassee-Cecil	0-5%	13.8% (58,137)	Well drained, moderately permeable soils
Cecil	0-5%	13.6% (57,567)	Well drained, moderately permeable soils
Saluda-Hayesville-Evard-Brevard-Bradson	15-30%	9.3% (39,367)	Well drained, moderately to moderately rapidly permeable soils
Pacolet-Madison-Davidson-Cecil	15-30%	7.1% (29,938)	Well drained, moderately permeable soils
Chester-Ashe	45-60%	4.7% (20,072)	Somewhat excessively drained, moderately to moderately rapidly permeable soils
Wilkes-Hiwassee-Cecil	5-15%	3.4% (14,444)	Well drained, slow to moderately slow to moderately permeable soils

Sources: USDA NRCS Soil Data Access, 2019; USDA NRCS Official Soil Series Descriptions, 2019

Five of the general soil series in Oconee County include Cecil soils. Cecil soils are very deep, well drained, and moderately permeable soils found on ridges and side slopes in the uplands of the Piedmont. Pacolet-Hiwassee-Cecil is the dominant soil series in the County, comprising nearly 29% of County soils (122,263 acres). The Wilkes-Hiwassee-Cecil series is the smallest group, found in the southeastern corner of the County near Lake Hartwell. Although well-drained, these soils can have slower permeability. Soils with slow permeability may impact septic tank absorption fields. While permeability in the County generally ranges from moderate to rapidly permeable, other factors such as slope may also impact septic tank suitability.

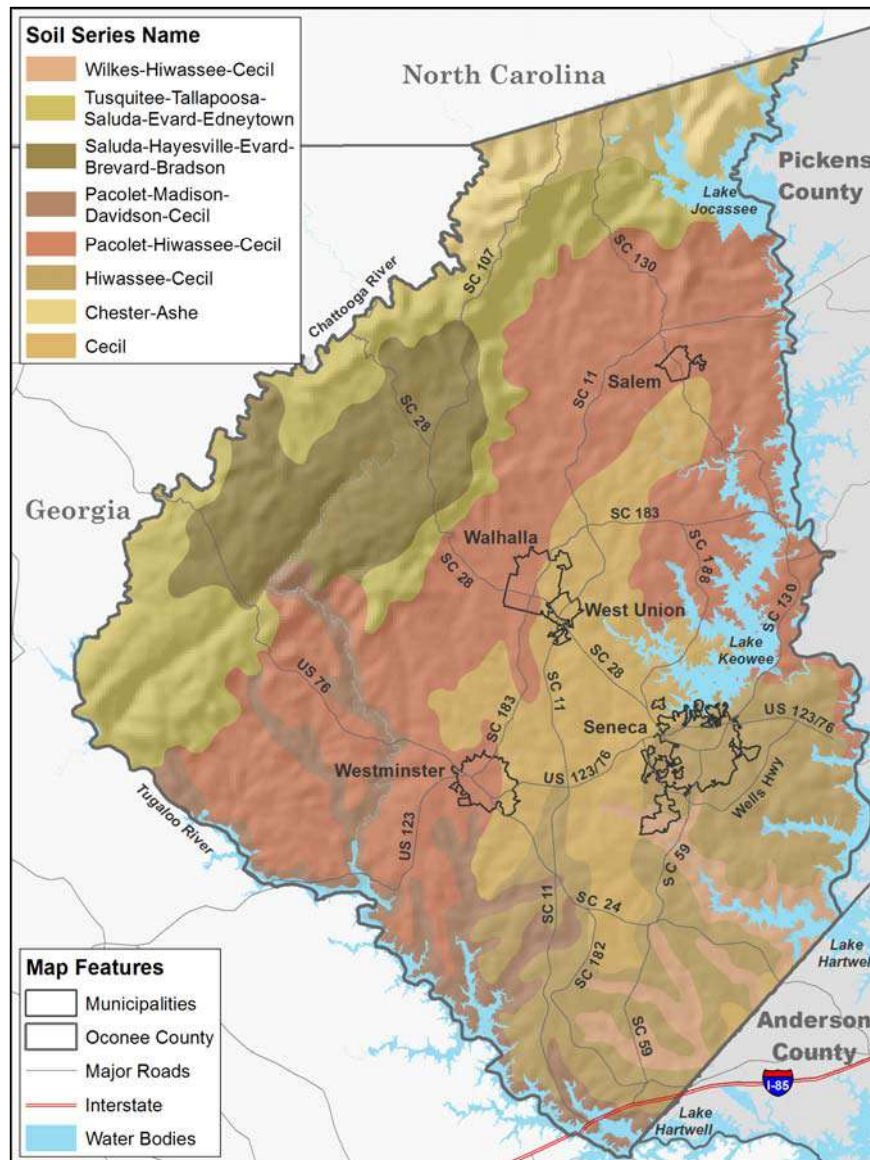
The general soil series map at 6-1 shows broad areas that have a distinctive pattern of soils, relief and drainage. While the depicted soils data is valuable in assessing the suitability of large areas for general land uses, it reflects only general limitations on urban development and should only be used for broad planning analysis. A detailed soil analysis should accompany site-specific development decisions.

Soil erosion is a concern for more than 60% of the County (*USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey, 2019*). Less than half (45%) of the County’s land is considered to be at moderate risk of erosion, indicating that some erosion is likely and control measures may be needed. Risk of erosion is severe or very severe for 15.4% of the County. A rating of severe (10.6% of the County or 45,416 acres) indicates that erosion is very likely and that erosion control measures such as replanting of bare areas is advised. Erosion is expected in areas considered to have a very severe risk (4.8% of the County or 20,741 acres). All of the soils at very severe risk of erosion and most at severe risk are in the western area of the County in the Sumter National Forest. Loss of soil productivity



and off-site damage is more likely on these lands where erosion control measures are typically costly and impractical to employ.

Map 6-1. General Soil Series



Source: USDA NRCS Soil Data Access, 2019

2. Slope

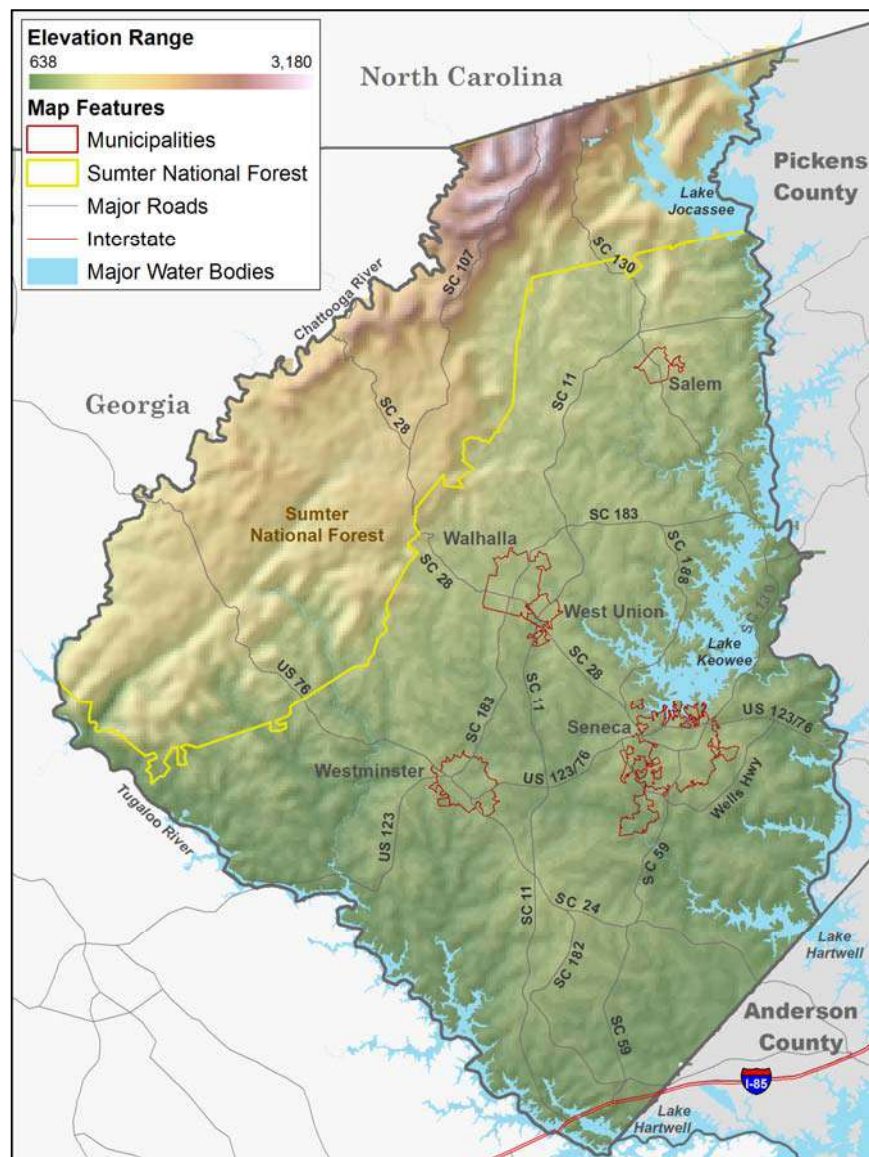
Slope characteristics have a direct impact on the types of land uses that have developed or may be developed in the future. The USDA defines slope gradient as "the difference in elevation between two points, expressed as a percentage of the distance between those points." Sites with slopes of less than 8% are typically most easily and cost-effectively developed, and are appropriate for most types of land uses. An increase in the slope makes a site more difficult and



expensive to develop, with increased limitations on the types of land uses that are appropriate. Table 6-3 provides a general listing of land uses and their associated slope limitations. In addition to slope, other factors that determine development suitability include soil limitations such as wetness, permeability, drainage, and flooding. These conditions may be difficult and expensive to mitigate, and can fall under regulatory limitations.

Elevation in Oconee County ranges from 638 feet above sea level to 3,180 feet. The County's lowest elevations are found along the river and creek beds and the lakes. The highest elevations are in the northern area of the County in the Sumter National Forest. Map 6-2 illustrates the topography of Oconee County using 2017 contour data.

Map 6-2. Elevation



Source: Oconee County GIS Department, 2019



The topography of Oconee County is largely conducive to many types of development, with some limitations in higher elevations and low-lying areas. Representative slope data is available from the USDA Soil Survey for most of Oconee County, with the exception of 79,297 acres in the Sumter National Forest. Based on the general slope range characteristics and data provided in Table 6-3, one-third of the land area in Oconee County outside of the National Forest (115,717 acres) has a slope of 8% or less and is suitable for all types of land uses. However soils with no slope (0%) primarily include rivers and drainage basins and may be subject to flood plain regulations. Development suitability is only slightly more limited for 13.5% of the County (47,245 acres), where a slope range of 9% to 16% readily accommodates residential and light commercial development and is suitable for heavier commercial and industrial development with appropriate site work.

Areas at the higher end of the slope range may not be as suitable for all types of development. The slope range for 26.5% (92,595 acres) of the County's land area is between 17% and 24%. Much of this land is generally suitable for low density residential uses, but site work is usually needed for commercial or industrial development. The slope range for more than a quarter (27%) of the County's land (94,415 acres) is 25% or greater. These lands are generally not suitable for intense development such as higher density subdivisions or commercial or industrial developments though such development may be possible with appropriate site work.

Table 6-3. Slope Percentage in Oconee County

Slope Range and Associated Land Uses	Acres	Percentage
Slope 8% or less	115,717.34	33.1%
Slope 9% to 16%	47,245.24	13.5%
Slope 17% to 24%	92,594.83	26.5%
Slope 25% and Greater	94,415.37	27.0%
Data not Available (areas within the Sumter National Forest)	79,297.20	18.5%
Total Acres	429,269.98	100.0%

Source: USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey, 2019

3. Mineral Deposits and Mines

The identification and location of mineral deposits can be important to the local economy. In South Carolina, mineral resources range from limestone, crushed stone, clay, and sand to granite, marble, and vermiculite. According to the U.S. Geological Survey's *2013 Minerals Yearbook for South Carolina*, a large majority of South Carolina's nonfuel mineral production results from the mining and production of construction minerals and materials. SCDHEC records indicate that there are two active mining operations in Oconee County as of 2019. One is a gold mining operation in the northern area of the County, and the other is the Oconee County Rock Quarry, a granite mining operation on Rock Crusher Road near Walhalla.

4. Residential Development Limitations

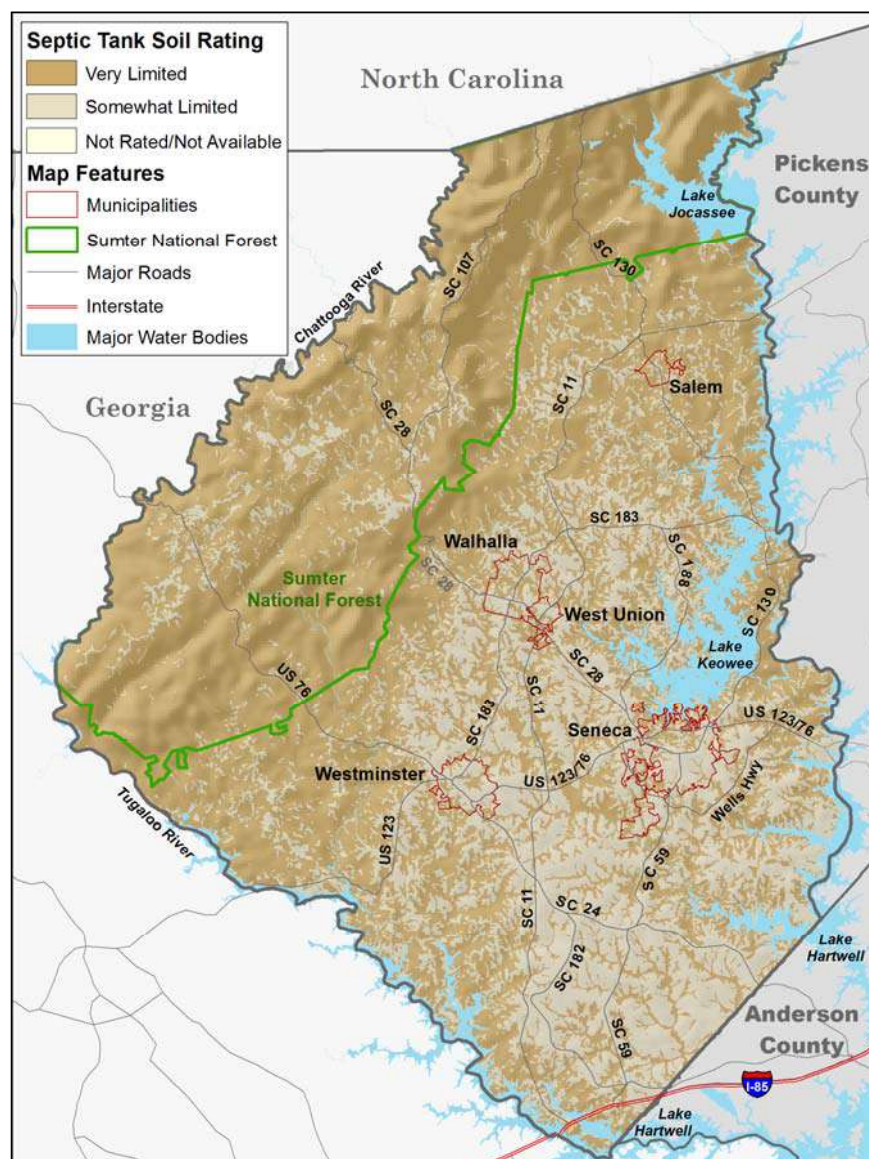
Access to wastewater treatment is limited in Oconee County. Wastewater treatment is provided by three municipalities through Seneca Light and Water and the Cities of Walhalla and Westminster. Public sewer treatment for wastewater collected by the municipalities is provided by the Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority. Wastewater collection and treatment is available within the Cities of Seneca, Walhalla, and Westminster, and in the Town of West Union. Also included are a few unincorporated areas of the County near these municipalities and along major corridors that connect these communities. Service also extends north from Seneca along S.C. Highway 130 near Lake Keowee, south from Seneca along S.C. Highway 59, east from Seneca along U.S. Highway 123, and north from Walhalla along S.C. Highway 11. Private authorities provide wastewater service to several of the County's larger residential developments including Chickasaw Point and Foxwood Hills on Lake Hartwell and Keowee Key on Lake Keowee.

Due to limited access to sewer service, residential development in much of Oconee County must rely on septic tanks. The use of septic systems for sewage disposal places additional limitations on residential development, impacting both location and lot sizes. State law, enforced by SCDHEC, requires that a parcel of land proposed for septic service is capable of allowing proper operation of the individual system, including a drain field. Suitability criteria are based on factors including soil type, parcel size, and slope.

Map 6-3 illustrates areas in the County with soils rated as "very limited" or "somewhat limited" under the *Septic Tank Soil Absorption Field Ratings* of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). These ratings are used to guide site selection for safe disposal of household effluent based on soil properties that affect absorption of the effluent and impact construction and maintenance of the system. Public health impact is also a consideration. While the ratings provide general information on soil suitability for septic tanks, onsite evaluation by SCDHEC is required before development and construction. Also, the USDA ratings apply to the soils in their present condition and do not consider potential impacts on soil quality by current and future land uses.

More than two-thirds (67.3%), or 288,903 acres, of land for which detailed soil data is available in Oconee County has been rated as "very limited" for septic tank soil absorption. The soils in much of the Sumter National Forest are included in this soil rating, in large part due to the steeper slope of the land in the northwestern area of Oconee County. This rating indicates that the soil has one or more features that may be unfavorable for use as a septic system absorption field and could result in poor performance and high maintenance if not properly installed. An additional 30.2% of County soils (129,787 acres) are rated as "somewhat limited," indicating that the soils have features that are moderately favorable for use as a septic system absorption field, but does not limit the use of such systems in these areas.

Map 6-3. Septic Tank Soil Absorption Ratings



Source: USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey, 2019

5. Plant and Animal Habitats

Wildlife habitat is an interrelated and often complex combination of land and soil properties, food sources and vegetative cover, water, and other physical factors that contribute to the survival of a species population. The number, quality and scope of animal and plant species are directly dependent on the quality and size of their habitat. In turn, habitats are affected directly by natural and man-made factors that include agricultural, residential, industrial, and commercial development, as well as fires and other natural disasters. Habitats declared critical to species identified as endangered or threatened are protected under Federal and State laws to safeguard and promote recovery of the species. Endangered species are those for which there is a danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range, while threatened species are



those identified to likely become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Protective measures for endangered plant and animal species include the development of recovery plans, the acquisition of habitat, and protection from disturbance for listed species. The definition of protection from disturbance differs between endangered plant and animal species. No penalties are incurred if endangered plant species are harmed in the course of legal land management practices. However, the intentional or negligent taking of an endangered animal species or destruction of its critical habitat is subject to prosecution under the *Endangered Species Act*. Destruction of an endangered plant is subject to prosecution under the *Act* if the plant is on federal lands including private land under management practices that require federal permits, or if the destruction occurs during the course of another illegal act such as trespassing.

All states must maintain lists of rare, threatened and endangered species under the National Heritage program. Species can be included on state lists, while not appearing on the national list, due to declining species populations in certain regions. The South Carolina Heritage Trust program of the SCDNR has identified plant and animal species at risk in South Carolina. The rare, threatened and endangered species inventory for Oconee County includes 34 animal species and 118 plant species.

Federal and State status denote those species that have formal protections in place by a Federal or State agency or Act, or that are under review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. *Endangered* species are those in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. *Threatened* species are likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. The *At Risk Species, Priority* classification is given to either a former candidate species or an emerging conservation priority species that is under review or on the agenda for review for designation as endangered or threatened. While a full and current list is available on the SCDNR website, a listing of the animal and plant species most at risk based on Federal and State designation is provided in Table 6-4.



Table 6-4. Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species Inventory for Oconee County, 2019

Scientific Name	Common Name	State Status
ANIMALS		
<i>Federal Status: Endangered</i>		
Myotis sodalis	Indiana Myotis	<i>Endangered</i> - species whose prospects of survival or recruitment within the State are in jeopardy or likely within the foreseeable future to become so
<i>Federal Status: Threatened</i>		
Myotis septentrionalis	Northern Long-eared Bat	No state status
<i>Federal Status: At Risk Species, Priority</i>		
Alasmidonta varicosa	Brook Floater	No state status
Aneides aeneus	Green Salamander	No state status
Cryptobranchus alleganiensis	Hellbender	No state status
Danaus plexippus	Monarch Butterfly	No state status
Eurycea chamberlaini	Chamberlain's Dwarf Salamander	No state status
Megaleuctra williamsae	Smokies Needlefly	No state status
Myotis leibii	Eastern Small-footed Myotis	<i>Threatened</i> - Species likely to become endangered and in need of management
Ophiogomphus edmundo	Edmund's Snaketail	No state status
Perimyotis subflavus	Tricolored Bat	No state status
Vermivora chrysoptera	Golden-winged Warbler	No state status
PLANTS		
<i>Federal Status: Endangered</i>		
Echinacea laevigata	Smooth Coneflower	No state status
Trillium persistens	Persistent Trillium	No state status
<i>Federal Status: Threatened</i>		
Isotria medeoloides	Small Whorled Pogonia	No state status
<i>Federal Status: At Risk Species, Priority</i>		
Rudbeckia heliopsisidis	Sun-facing Coneflower	No state status
Symphotrichum georgianum	Georgia Aster	No state status
Tsuga caroliniana	Carolina Hemlock	No state status
<i>Federal Status: Species of Concern</i>		
Shortia Galacifolia	Oconee Bell	No state status

Sources: S.C. Department of Natural Resources, January 2019; Oconee County Planning & Zoning, March 2019

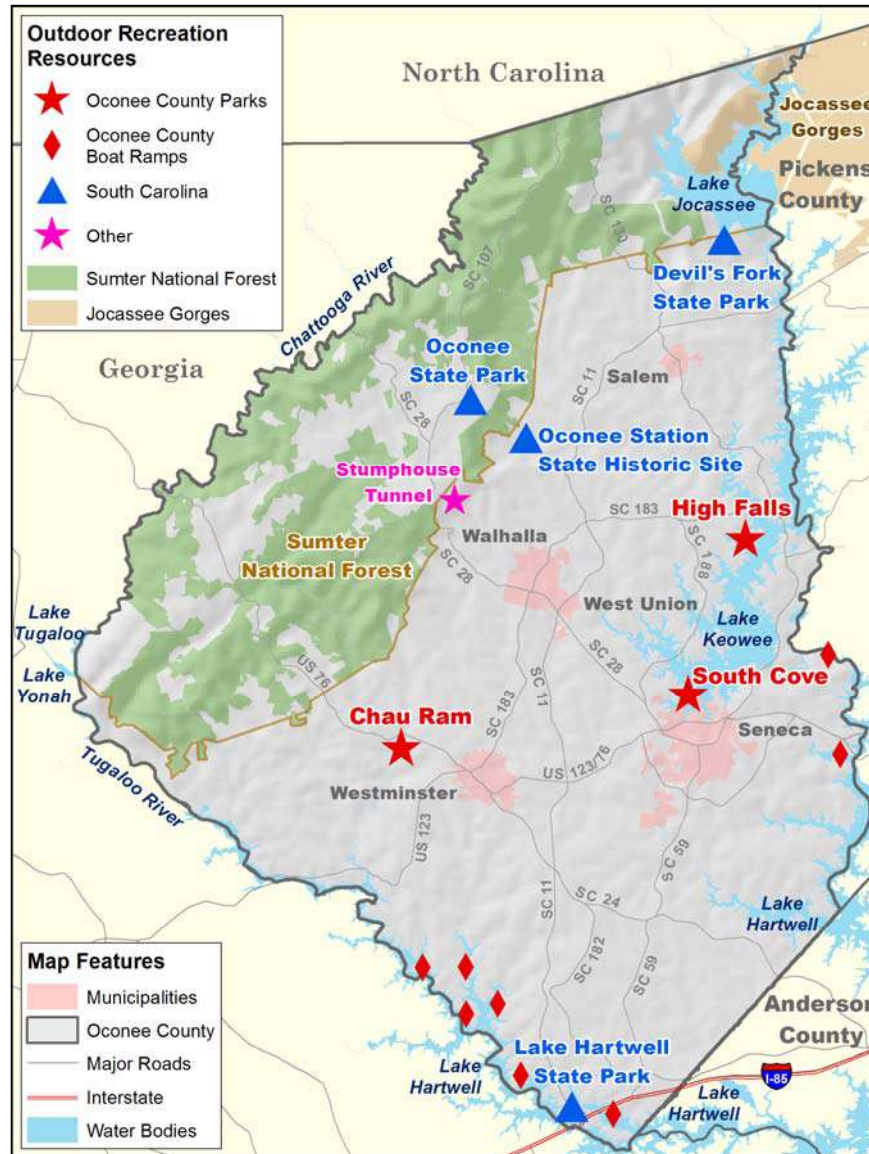
6. Outdoor Recreation and Scenic Areas

Oconee County residents and visitors are fortunate to have access to numerous and diverse land and water opportunities for outdoor recreation. These resources include the Sumter National Forest, four State parks, three County parks, eight County boat ramps, nature and hiking trails, multiple camping areas, and some smaller parks and recreation facilities. Water resources



include three major lakes, the Chattooga, Chauga and Tugaloo Rivers, and numerous waterfalls. Locations of the County’s major outdoor recreation resources are shown on Map 6-4.

Map 6-4. Major Outdoor Recreation Resources



Sources: Oconee County GIS Dept., December 2018; SCDNR, January 2019

a. Sumter National Forest

Located within the northwestern portion of Oconee County are almost 84,000 acres of the nearly 371,000 acre **Sumter National Forest** – one of only two national forests in South Carolina. The Forest was established in 1936 and is managed by the USDA Forest Service for multiple uses including watershed protection and improvement, timber and wood production, habitat for wildlife and fish species, wilderness area management, and recreation. The **Andrew Pickens**



Ranger District in Oconee County is one of three ranger districts that comprise the Sumter National Forest. Management of the District emphasizes habitat restoration and enhancement for a diverse range of wildlife and plant species, particularly rare, threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. Popular attractions in the District include hunting, fishing, hiking, fall color sightseeing, camping, horseback riding, and whitewater rafting and kayaking on the Wild and Scenic Chattooga River. The District includes numerous waterfalls and hiking trails. The Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area offers opportunities for off-trail hiking and primitive camping. Map 6-4 illustrates the extent of Sumter National Forest (SNF) lands in Oconee County, including lands owned by the USDA Forest Service.

b. State Parks

Devils Fork State Park is located on Lake Jocassee near S.C. Highway 11 (Map 6-4). The 644-acre park provides the only public access to the Lake, with four boat ramps and a courtesy dock. The Park also provides 20 lakeside villas, 59 campsites with water and electricity, 25 tent camping sites, two picnic shelters, two playgrounds, an indoor meeting room, a two-mile hiking trail, a one-mile nature trail, and a campground that is accessible only by boat. Devils Fork is located in the middle of the Jocassee Gorges and includes several waterfalls accessible only by boat. One of South Carolina's unique and rare wildflowers can be found blooming from mid-March to early April on the Oconee Bell Nature Trail in the Park.

Lake Hartwell State Park is located in the southern area of the County in the Fair Play community near Highway 11 (Map 6-4). The 680-acre park includes 14 miles of Lake Hartwell shoreline. The park provides two boat ramps, a courtesy dock, and a 140-foot fishing pier. Also provided are 115 campsites with water and electricity, 13 walk-in tent sites, two camper cabins, a 0.75 mile nature trail, two playgrounds, and a picnic shelter.

Oconee State Park is located in the Mountain Rest community near S.C. Highway 107 (Map 6-4). The 1,165-acre park was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s and is on the National Register of Historic Places. The park offers 139 standard campsites with water and electricity, 15 designated rustic tent sites, 19 historic cabins, four picnic shelters, three playgrounds, two lakes that can be used for fishing and boating, a swimming area with lifeguards, and an 18-hole miniature golf course. Oconee State Park includes six trails ranging from easy to strenuous in difficulty and serves as the southern trailhead for the Foothills Trail, the State's 77-mile wilderness hike on the Blue Ridge Escarpment.

The **Oconee Station State Historic Site** is located north of Walhalla near S.C. Highway 11 on Oconee Station Road. Originally used as a military compound and later a trading post, the 210-acre Historic Site provides a unique representation of 18th and 19th century South Carolina. The site includes two buildings on the National Register of Historic Places - a stone blockhouse built in 1792 as an outpost for the S.C. State Militia and the William Richards House, built in 1805. The Site also includes a four-acre fishing pond, a 1.5-mile nature trail, the four-mile Oconee



Connector trail that joins Oconee Station with Oconee State Park, and the 60-foot Station Cove Falls waterfall at the end of the nature trail.

c. County Parks and Recreation Facilities

There are 32 County and municipal outdoor park and recreation facilities encompassing nearly 553 acres in Oconee County. Eleven of the parks and facilities are owned and maintained by Oconee County, eight by the City of Seneca, seven by the City of Walhalla, five by the City of Westminster, and one by the Town of West Union. The new 14-acre Foothills YMCA is also currently under construction just outside of Seneca.

These resources highlight the abundance of natural resources in the County and accommodate a wide range of outdoor activities. Visitors to these parks enjoy access to hiking trails, boating, fishing, camping, and swimming. Active opportunities include a disc golf course, public pool, baseball, softball and soccer fields, and courts for basketball, tennis, pickleball, horseshoes, and volleyball. Major County parks, including the Stumphouse Tunnel/Issaqueena Falls Park, are described below and shown on Map 6-4. Additional parks and recreation resources in Oconee County are described in more detail in the Community Facilities Element.

Chau Ram County Park is located at the confluence of Ramsey Creek and the Chauga River, west of Westminster off of U.S. Highway 76. The 198-acre County Park offers 26 campsites with water and electricity, additional tent sites, five picnic shelters, a recreational building, a playground, and shower facilities. Main attractions of the Park include over a mile of the Chauga River, a handicap accessible 40-foot waterfall, a 160-foot suspension bridge spanning the River, and more than three miles of hiking trails. Guests enjoy tubing, hiking, fishing, picnicking, camping, and enjoying the Park's unique and spectacular vistas. Oconee County is working with Upstate Forever on an option to purchase an available 218-acre parcel of land adjacent to Chau Ram County Park. This addition would enable the County to plan for expansion of camping and hiking opportunities, as well as mountain biking.

High Falls County Park is on Lake Keowee, located east of Walhalla off of S.C. Highway 183. The 46-acre County Park provides 91 campsites with water and electricity (10 waterfront), shower and restroom facilities, two shelters, a recreational building, miniature golf course, a tennis/basketball court, horseshoe and volleyball courts, picnic areas, and a playground. Two boat ramps, a swimming area, and a fishing pier offer access to Lake Keowee for water sports and fishing. Oconee County is working with Duke Energy on the possibility of utilizing what is currently referred to as the Keowee-Toxaway project as an addition to the High Falls County Park. The potential expansion, known as High Falls II, would add 36 acres and provide additional amenities for park visitors. A master plan for High Falls II has been completed in partnership with Duke Energy and is awaiting funding availability.

South Cove County Park is located on a peninsula of Lake Keowee just north of Seneca on South Cove Road. The location combines proximity to restaurants and other amenities in the City of

Seneca with prime access to Lake Keowee and nearby Clemson University. The 48-acre County Park offers 86 campsites with water and electricity, including 46 waterfront sites, and shower and restroom facilities. Also provided are four pickleball courts, three tennis courts, basketball and horseshoe courts, a playground, picnic areas, and a recreational building and shelter for gatherings. Three boat ramps, a handicapped accessible fishing pier and a waterfront sand beach provide access to Lake Keowee for boating and fishing.

Oconee County also maintains eight public boat ramps on Lake Hartwell (Map 6-4). The *Fair Play*, *Mullins Ford* and *Lawrence Bridge Recreation Areas* all provide a boat ramp, a courtesy dock, picnic areas, and restrooms. The Fair Play Recreation Area also provides a playground and swimming area. The *Choestoea*, *Mountain Bay*, *Port Bass*, *Seneca Creek*, and *South Union* boat access areas are leased to the County by the Corps of Engineers. The Mountain Bay access area also offers a courtesy dock. Upgrades are planned for the Seneca Creek facility that will include restrooms, a trail, bank fishing, picnic area, kayak launch, fishing pier, and a courtesy dock.

The City of Walhalla's 7.13-acre *Stumphouse Tunnel/Issaqueena Falls Park* is home to two unique features. The 1,617-foot Stumphouse Tunnel was started in 1852 to allow connection from Charleston to Knoxville. However, the Civil War and lack of funding brought construction to a halt before completion. Clemson University purchased the tunnel in 1951 and originally used it to cure their signature blue cheese. While the tunnel is still owned by the University, it is managed by the City of Walhalla. Down a short path from the tunnel is Issaqueena Falls, a 100-foot cascade waterfall that can be viewed from several points including a lookout platform. In addition to the tunnel and falls, the Park includes a hiking trail, picnic shelter, and picnic areas.

Oconee County is among several partners working closely with the City on development of the new *Stumphouse Mountain Bike Park*. The Park is a state-of-the-art facility with multi-purpose trails that will total more than 20 miles when completed. Phase one of the project opened the 1.5-mile Stumphouse Passage of the Palmetto Trail and 2.5 miles of loop trails that accommodate mountain biking and hiking. Phase two will add six additional miles when completed in late 2019. Phase three is in the planning stages and is expected to complete the trail over the next several years.

c. Lake and River Recreation Resources

There are many access points for residents and visitors to enjoy Oconee County's water resources. Major lake and river recreation resources are described below and shown on Map 6-4.

Lake Keowee covers 18,372 acres, with 387 miles of shoreline that includes access from Oconee County's High Falls and South Cove Parks. The Lake is managed by Duke Energy. There are nine public boat ramps on the Lake, including six in Oconee County. In addition to three marinas with pumpouts, there are several fishing access locations, including the pier and boat dock at the Duke

World of Energy at Oconee Nuclear Station, piers at the two County parks, and Stamp Creek Access Pier (SCDNR, 2019).

Lake Hartwell is 56,000 acres in size, with a 962-mile shoreline that includes access from Lake Hartwell State Park in Oconee County. The Lake is managed by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. There are 45 boat ramps on Lake Hartwell, with 14 in Oconee County. Eight of the boat ramps are managed by the County. The Corp manages eight campgrounds on the Lake, with two in Oconee County. The *Coneross Campground* on Coneross Creek Road provides 106 camp sites, of which 94 have water and electricity. Also included are a boat ramp and courtesy dock, shower and restroom facilities, a playground, and a swimming beach. The *Oconee Point Campground* is located off of South Friendship Road and provides 70 campsites with water and electricity, shower and restroom facilities, boat ramp and courtesy dock, and a playground. Oconee County manages several areas for day use only (no camping allowed) including the Fair Play Recreation Area, Lawrence Bridge Recreation Area, and Mullins Ford Recreation Area. All recreation areas provide boat ramps, courtesy docks, restrooms, and picnic areas. The Fair Play recreation area also provides a swimming beach and playground.

Lake Jocassee is 7,565 acres in size, with 75 miles of mostly undeveloped shoreline that includes access from Devil's Fork State Park. The Lake is owned and managed by Duke Energy. Lake Jocassee is the deepest lake in the State, with a maximum depth of approximately 351 feet and an average depth of 157 feet. The mountain rivers that feed the Lake keep it cool and clear year-round, making it popular for fishing, diving, swimming, paddling, and other water sports. There are four boat ramps on the Lake, with two in the State Park. One of the State Park's campgrounds can only be accessed by boat.

The **Chauga River** is a 31.3-mile long tributary of the Tugaloo River that flows from the north in the western area of Oconee County before joining with Ramsey Creek in the Chau Ram County Park. The River includes Class IV rapids ideal for whitewater kayaking near the Cassidy Bridge but slows before flowing into Lake Hartwell to provide paddling opportunities. As a hatchery-supported trout stream, the Chauga is also a very popular fishing destination. Access to the River from Oconee County and is available at the Cassidy Bridge access and parking area.

The **Chattooga River** has been protected since 1974 as a National Wild and Scenic River. Nearly 40 miles of the River have been designated as "wild," 2.5 miles as "scenic," and 14.6 miles as "recreational." Known as the "Crown Jewel" of the southeast, the Chattooga was the first river east of the Mississippi to be granted the Wild and Scenic designation and is still the only one where commercial rafting is allowed. The area surrounding the River is managed by the U.S. Forest Service. On commercially rafted sections (III and IV) there is a quarter-mile long protected corridor of the National Forest on both sides of the River that allows no roads to the river or development of any kind. The segment above the S.C. Highway 28 bridge is generally reserved for fishing for trout or redeye bass, while below the bridge is the 26-mile stretch of what is considered some of the best whitewater rafting available in the east, with class II, III, IV, and V



rapids available. However, the number of trips and people per trip is strictly regulated to protect the River.

The *Tugaloo River* is a 45.9-mile long river that serves as a portion of the western border of Oconee County and South Carolina with Georgia. The River is fed by the Tallulah and Chattooga Rivers and ends as an arm of Lake Hartwell. The River is popular for boating, sailing, fishing, and other water sports. *Lake Yonah* is a 525-acre lake on the Tugaloo River in the westernmost area of Oconee County, with over nine miles of shoreline. The Lake provides opportunities for paddling and other water sports and fishing, with access available at the Yonah Boat Ramp in Tallulah Falls, Georgia. *Lake Tugaloo* is a 597-acre lake with 18 miles of shoreline. The Lake is fed by the Tallulah and Chattooga Rivers and is known as the perfect place to paddle and fish. Access to Lake Tugaloo for Oconee County residents is available at the boat ramp on Bull Sluice Road in the Long Creek community.

d. Hiking Trails and Waterfalls

Oconee County is known as the “Golden Corner” of South Carolina because of its temperate climate, beautiful lakes and rivers, and the Blue Ridge Mountains. Adventurers, backpackers, hikers, photographers, campers, nature lovers, and families are drawn to the County’s natural and recreational resources. Chief among the draws for visitors and residents are the 193 miles of trails in Oconee County, ranging in size from small spurs of less than a mile to the 77-mile Foothills Trail. Many of these trails lead hikers to the County’s nearly 150 waterfalls, to the Wild and Scenic Chattooga River, and to County and State parks. Table 6-6 lists the trails in Oconee County and describes the waterfalls and other destinations accessed along these trails. More detailed descriptions and photos of some of the County’s spectacular waterfalls are provided at <http://scmountainlakes.com/play/waterfalls-in-sc/>.

Of particular note are two larger trail systems that include passages within Oconee County. The 77-mile *Foothills Trail* extends from Oconee State Park to Table Rock State Park in Pickens County. The first 28 miles of the Trail from Oconee State Park to Upper Whitewater Falls was designated a *National Recreation Trail* in 1979. While numerous trailheads offer opportunities for day hikes, the full trek can take more than a week for backpackers who wish to hike the entire trail and include some of the many spur trails and connectors. Rated as “one of the best long trails (50 miles or more) in the Country” by Backpacker magazine, hiking difficulty on the Foothills Trail varies from moderate to strenuous. Primitive camping is allowed at various places along the trail and campsites are available at Burrell’s Ford Campground, Cherry Hill Recreation Area, and Oconee State Park in Oconee County and Table Rock State Park in Pickens County.

The *Palmetto Trail* is South Carolina’s longest pedestrian and bicycle trail, with 27 passages totaling 350 miles through 14 counties completed to date. Trails range from 1.3 miles to 47 miles in length. When completed, the route will extend 500 continuous miles from Oconee County to the Intracoastal Waterway. The trail was established in 1994 to provide free access to trails of all levels of difficulty and varying length. The entire Trail is open to hiking and backpacking, with



designated passages available for mountain biking, horseback riding, and camping. One of only 16 cross-state trails in the United States, the Palmetto Trail is a federally designated Millennium Legacy Trail. Two passages of the Palmetto Trail are in Oconee County – the Oconee Passage that connects Oconee State Park to the Oconee Station State Historical Site, and the new Stumphouse Passage that is the first phase of the planned 20-mile Stumphouse Mountain Bike Park (Table 6-6).

Table 6-6. Hiking Trails and Water Falls

Trail and Water Falls	Length (miles)	Description
Bad Creek Spur	0.8	Easy spur trail connecting Whitewater River, Foothills Trail, Coon Branch Trail, and Lower Whitewater Falls, with trailhead at Duke Energy's Bad Creek Hydro Station on S.C. Hwy. 130
Bee Cove Falls	2.1	Difficult 2-3 hour hike to multi-tiered Bee Cove Falls
Beech Bluff	0.8	Easy natural trail in Lake Hartwell State Park with scenic views
Big Bend	3.3	Moderately easy hike to the Chattooga River and 30' Big Bend Falls
Blue Hole Falls	0.5	Moderately difficult hike into pristine wilderness and to 75' Blue Hole Falls and the pool that gives the area its name
Blue Ridge Railroad	2.5	Moderately difficult walk that follows incomplete 19 th century Blue Ridge Railroad rail bed, includes 3 abandoned tunnels
Brasstown Falls	0.3	Short but moderately difficult hike to 120' Brasstown Falls and the calm swimming hole at the base of the upper falls
Bruce Hill-Shaver	0.7	Easy walking trail that links the Shaver Complex with the Bruce Hill community, part of the Seneca Greenway system
Bull Sluice	0.2	Moderately steep paved access to Chattooga River flat water or moderately difficult gravel path to Bull Sluice
Chauga Narrows	0.6	Easy walk to the Chauga Narrows that includes both turbulent whitewater (Class IV rapid) and nearby flatwater
Chau Ram County Park	4.0	Easy to moderate hike along Chauga River that includes the 40' Ramsey Creek Falls waterfall
Choestoea	0.8	Easy hike along old road bed on Lake Hartwell peninsula
Coon Branch Natural Area	6.0	Moderate hike along Coon Branch, intersects with Lower Whitewater Trail to Lower Whitewater Falls waterfall
Ellicott Rock Trail	6.8	Easy hike the follows the Chattooga River to Ellicott Rock, part of the greater Chattooga River Trail
Foothills Access	1.2	Moderate hike as an access trail to the Foothills Trail
Hidden Falls	2.1	Moderate hike to 50' Hidden Falls
Issaqueena Falls	0.2	Easy hike beginning at Stumphouse Tunnel to platform to view the 100' cascade of Issaqueena Falls
Keowee Elementary	0.2	Easy scenic walking trail that circles a multi-purpose field
Oconee State Park Lake	1.2	Easy hike around the State Park's lake
Lee Falls	1.5	Difficult hike with no official trail to 75' Lee Falls, provides opportunities to view Oconee Bell flowers
Licklog and Pigpen Falls	0.9	Easy hike to 25' Pigpen Falls and two-tiered 80' Licklog Falls

Table 6-6. Hiking Trails and Water Falls

Trail and Water Falls	Length (miles)	Description
Long Creek Falls	3.3	Moderately difficult hike to 50' Long Creek Falls that cascades into the Chattooga River
Lower Whitewater Falls	2.0	Moderately difficult hike to an observation platform for the dramatic 200' drop of Lower Whitewater Falls
Miuka Falls	1.2	Easy hike to 75' Miuka Falls, a spur trail off Winding Stairs Trail
Moss Mill Creek	0.4	Hike to Moss Mill Creek, a hatchery-supported trout fishing stream
Mountain Rest Community	0.4	Easy hike to the Mountain Rest Community Club
Oconee	2.3	Moderately difficult trail around Oconee State Park lake
Oconee Bells Nature	1.5	Easy hike within Devils Fork State Park offering sightings of Oconee Bell wildflowers
Oconee Station	1.5	Easy nature hike circling the pond in Oconee Station State Historical Site
Old Waterwheel	1.4	Moderately difficult, occasionally steep trail leading to stone remnants of a former waterwheel
Sandy Ford	0.3	Easy, moderately steep hike to gentle rapids of the Chattooga River
Secret Falls	3.5	Easy downhill hike to 60' Secret Falls
Stumphouse Passage of the Palmetto Trail/Stumphouse Mountain Bike Park	4.0	Recently opened Phase I includes 1.5-mile passage of the Palmetto Trail and 2.5 miles of loop trails for both mountain biking and hiking
Tamassee Knob	2.2	Strenuous hike to the top of Tamassee Knob
Thrift's Ferry	0.4	Easy hike to flat shoals of Chattooga River, ideal for canoe/kayak launching
Westminster Elementary	0.6	Walking trail
Woodall Shoals	0.2	Moderately difficult, steep hike to Woodall shoals on the Chattooga River
Sumter National Forest		
Big Bend Falls	3.4	Strenuous hike to the 30' Big Bend Falls hydraulic, the largest drop on the Chattooga River; primitive camping allowed
Chattooga River Trail	15.5	Primitive hiking/backpacking trail ranging from moderately to extremely difficult along the Chattooga River; shared sections with the Foothills and Bartram Trails; primitive camping allowed
Earls Ford	0.3	Easy hike to Chattooga River
East Fork	2.5	Easy hike along the north bank of the Chattooga River with two trailheads – one at Chattooga Picnic Area and the other at Burrells Ford, primitive camping allowed
Fall Creek Falls	2.0	Strenuous primitive hike along Fall Creek to the Chattooga River that includes 3 waterfalls, each 30-50' high



Table 6-6. Hiking Trails and Water Falls

Trail and Water Falls	Length (miles)	Description
Foothills Trail	76.0 (16.6 miles in SNF)	Moderate to strenuous hike from Oconee State Park to Table Rock State Park in Pickens County (28-mile section from Oconee State Park to Upper Whitewater Falls in N.C. is designated as a National Recreation Trail); primitive camping allowed
Fork Mountain	6.4	Moderately difficult remote hike from Sloan Bridge Picnic Area to Ellicott Rock Wilderness Area (N.C.) joining Bad Creek Trail and leading to Chattooga Trail; primitive camping allowed
King Creek Falls	0.5	Moderately difficult hike to 70' King Creek Falls
Oconee Passage of the Palmetto Trail	3.2	Moderately difficult hiking/difficult mountain biking section of the Palmetto Trail that begins in Oconee State Park and ends at Oconee Station State Historical Site
Opossum Creek Falls	2.0	Difficult hike past the Chattooga River to the base of the 50' Opossum Creek Falls; primitive camping allowed
Riley Moore Falls	0.7	Moderately difficult hike to the 12' Riley Moore Falls, with a 100' wide cascade, on the Chauga River; primitive camping allowed
Rocky Gap/Willis Knob	12.4	Difficult but scenic trail for hikers and horses – known as Rocky Gap in S.C. and Willis Knob in N.C. (15 miles) – that descends into the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River corridor and loops back and forth across the River
Spoonauger Falls	0.5	Easy hike to 50' multi-tiered Spoonhauger Falls; primitive camping allowed
Station Cove Falls	0.5	Easy hike into the Sumter National Forest and ending at 60' stepped Station Cove Falls, intersects with the Oconee Passage of the Palmetto Trail
Winding Stairs	3.5	Easy hike, mostly along Townes Creek, that includes access to 75' Miuka Falls via a spur trail
Yellow Branch Falls	1.3	Moderately difficult hike to the base of the spectacular 50' cascade of Yellow Branch Falls
Yellow Branch Nature	0.4	Moderately difficult nature trail along Yellow Branch Creek, connects to Yellow Branch Falls trail
Total Miles	192.8	

Sources: Oconee County Parks and Recreation Dept.; SCtrails.net; USDA Forest Service, February 2019

e. Scenic Views and Sites

Beautiful vistas and scenic sites are so abundant in Oconee County that it is not feasible to list them all. Amazing views of pristine forests, dramatic gorges, pastoral lakes, rushing rivers, and picturesque waterfalls are available, whether by car along the scenic byways, by boat from the lakes and rivers, or on foot, horseback, or mountain bike via the area's many trails. Many of these sites are found in the Sumter National Forest and the State and County Parks, and have been



described in the preceding sections of this Element. Other notable sites and views are summarized in the following paragraphs.

A series of steep sided gorges carrying eight major mountain streams down to the Piedmont have carved a generally uniform sloping face of an escarpment with dramatic elevation changes. These gorges together are known as the *Jocassee Gorges*. Defining the end of the South Carolina Piedmont, the Jocassee Gorges run parallel to the North Carolina border and climb 2,000 vertical feet in elevation in just one to two miles. In the creation of the gorges, the mountain streams produced a spectacular concentration of waterfalls, one of the primary reasons why National Geographic named the Jocassee Gorges region as a “Destination of a Lifetime” in a special edition highlighting “50 of the World’s Last Great Places.” The region has benefitted from major conservation and land preservation in recent decades that involved federal and state agencies, land trusts, conservations groups, and corporations.

Cooperative acquisition efforts between the S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR), Duke Energy, the Richard King Mellon Foundation, and the Conservation Fund have ensured the continued protection of the natural and recreational resources of the 43,500 Jocassee Gorges tract. SCDNR owns most of the Gorges, with activities governed by a management plan. The primary consideration in the plan is to maintain the natural character of the area, with the secondary objective of providing public recreation that is compatible with the area’s natural character. Recreational activities accommodated in the Plan include hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and hiking. The Jocassee Gorges is largely wild and forested, with access limited to managed areas through gateways that include State Parks and other established locations for day use and overnight ventures. The management plan also recognizes that Jocassee Gorges provides tremendous opportunity for scientific study and education. The area is home to rare plant and animal species and has been the site of important wildlife and fisheries restoration projects.

The Jocassee Gorges is home to more than 60 species of rare and endangered plants. One of South Carolina’s unique and rare plants is the *Oconee Bell flower*, a white and yellow blossom with red stem and red-tinged leaves found in only a few locations in the mountains of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia (Figure 6-1). The flower grows in humid, rocky outcrops around rugged gorges and cool, shady woods along streams and waterfalls. Among the best places to see the Oconee Bell is along the Oconee Bell Trail in Devils Fork State Park. The plant blooms annually from mid-March to early April.

Oconee Bell Flower



Source: South Carolina State Parks, 2019

The **Old Highway 123 Fishing Pier (Old Tugaloo River Bridge)** is an historic truss bridge that once connected South Carolina to Georgia along U.S. Highway 123 over Lake Hartwell in the Madison community near Westminster. The bridge was replaced in the 1950s and disconnected and is now known as the “Broken Bridges.” The separate ends of the bridge now serve as peaceful and scenic fishing piers. The Pier is managed by the U.S. Corp of Engineers, with parking provided.

The **Oscar B. Wigington Scenic Byway** is only 20 miles long, but it leads to one of the most spectacular overlooks in the State. The **Oscar Wigington Overlook** offers stunning views of Lake Jocassee and the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Byway is lined on both sides by remote forestland and is especially beautiful during the fall color season and in early summer when the rhododendron are blooming. Along the Byway are access roads to several waterfalls, the Walhalla Fish Hatchery, the Chattooga River, state and national forest campgrounds, and miles of hiking trails.

The **Walhalla State Fish Hatchery (WSFH)**, located off of S.C. Highway 107 in the Sumter National Forest, was built by the Work Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. Originally managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, management of the Fish Hatchery has since been transferred to the S.C. Department of Natural Resources. The WSFH is SCDNR’s only cold water fish hatchery, raising brown, brook, and rainbow trout to stock the State’s public waters, including Oconee County. Approximately 500,000 trout are produced and stocked annually by WSFH in support of recreational fishing. Very large trout are also kept at the hatchery on display for the public. Visitors are welcome to tour the hatchery, to fish in the East Fork of the Chattooga River that runs through the Hatchery grounds, and to picnic in designated areas.

7. Land Conservation

The preservation and conservation of Oconee County's abundant and unique land resources continues to be a high priority for County residents. While conservation and protection of much of the County's resources is carried out by Federal, State and local agencies, non-profit organizations continue to conserve and preserve land through outright purchase and conservation easements. A conservation easement is a voluntary contract between a landowner and a qualified land trust or public entity that allows the landowner to legally restrict certain land uses such as subdivisions, commercial or industrial operations, or mining from occurring on their property while allowing traditional rural uses such as farming, grazing, hunting, and timbering to continue. The easement is permanent and remains with the land after it has been sold or conveyed to heirs. There are a number of additional organizations that are working to conserve and preserve land in Oconee County including the S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, the U.S. Forest Service, and county and municipal governments.

The mission of the *South Carolina Conservation Bank* is "to improve the quality of life in South Carolina through the conservation of significant natural resource lands, wetlands, historical properties, archeological sites, and urban parks." The Bank is considered one of the State's most important land protection tools and a key funding source for land conservation statewide. Since its inception in 2002, the Bank has protected nearly 250,000 acres in 42 counties. Funding for the Bank is provided by a portion of the real estate transfer fee. The Bank provides grants for woodlands/wetlands, farmlands, urban parks, and historical and archaeological sites through a competitive grant application process. Funding from the Bank has been used to conserve more than 5,000 acres in Oconee County, including farmland and tracts adjoining lakes, rivers and creeks. Other tracts adjoin Sumter National Forest, State Parks and Chau Ram County Park, as well as Stumphouse Mountain, which is now in use as Stumphouse Tunnel/Issaqueena Falls Park. The Oconee County Soil and Water Conservation District, Upstate Forever, and Naturaland Trust have been awarded grants to conserve these tracts.

The *Heritage Trust Program* of SCDNR has preserved and protected natural and cultural properties throughout the State since 1974. Heritage Trust staff work with related agencies to identify and document rare plants, animals, archaeological sites, and other significant features of South Carolina's heritage. This information is used to determine the locations that have the most conservation potential. One of the program goals is to permanently protect the best examples of these features through a system of heritage preserves. These preserves are managed to sustain or improve habitat for species that are already on the property, those that may return to the area, and species that may colonize the area following improvement. There are four Heritage Preserves in Oconee County, including the Brasstown Creek, Buzzard Roost, and Stumphouse Mountain Heritage Preserves/Wildlife Management Areas. SCDNR sets and regulates the methods of harvest, bag limits, and other hunting requirements in wildlife management areas. While the Sumter National Forest is owned by the U.S. Forest Service, it is managed in a cooperative partnership with SCDNR and is considered a Heritage Preserve.



The *Oconee County Soil and Water Conservation District* is “dedicated to the preservation and protection of the natural resources of Oconee County and all of South Carolina.” The District’s conservation easement program is designed to protect the County’s “precious resources and productive farmland.” Through the program, the Soil and Water Conservation District has secured 19 conservation easements that protect approximately 2,200 acres. The District is currently working to secure protections on an additional 450 acres.

The *Oconee County Conservation Bank* (OCCB) was established by the Oconee County Council in 2011 as an independent body whose mission is to leverage available funds to protect significant natural, cultural, and historic resources in the County (*OCCB Press Release, 2012*). The OCCB provides financial incentives to willing landowners of properties that meet specific criteria to convey either a conservation easement or fee simple title to eligible recipients such as non-profits managed to hold conservation lands or government bodies. Oconee County Council must approve all projects. Through this process, the program seeks to simultaneously protect valuable natural resources and private property rights. The Board has protected three properties totaling 174.04 acres since 2011, through private donations from corporations, non-profits, and citizens.

A number of private conservation groups are also working towards protecting critical lands and water through the creation of voluntary conservation easements and other conservation and preservation work.

D. WATER RESOURCES

The quality and availability of water have played a key role in the development of Oconee County, and will continue to shape its future development. This influence is reflected in the County’s name, derived from the Cherokee word “Aconnee” that means “land beside the water.” Oconee County relies on both surface and ground water from local sources to accommodate residential, commercial, and industrial need.

1. Surface Water

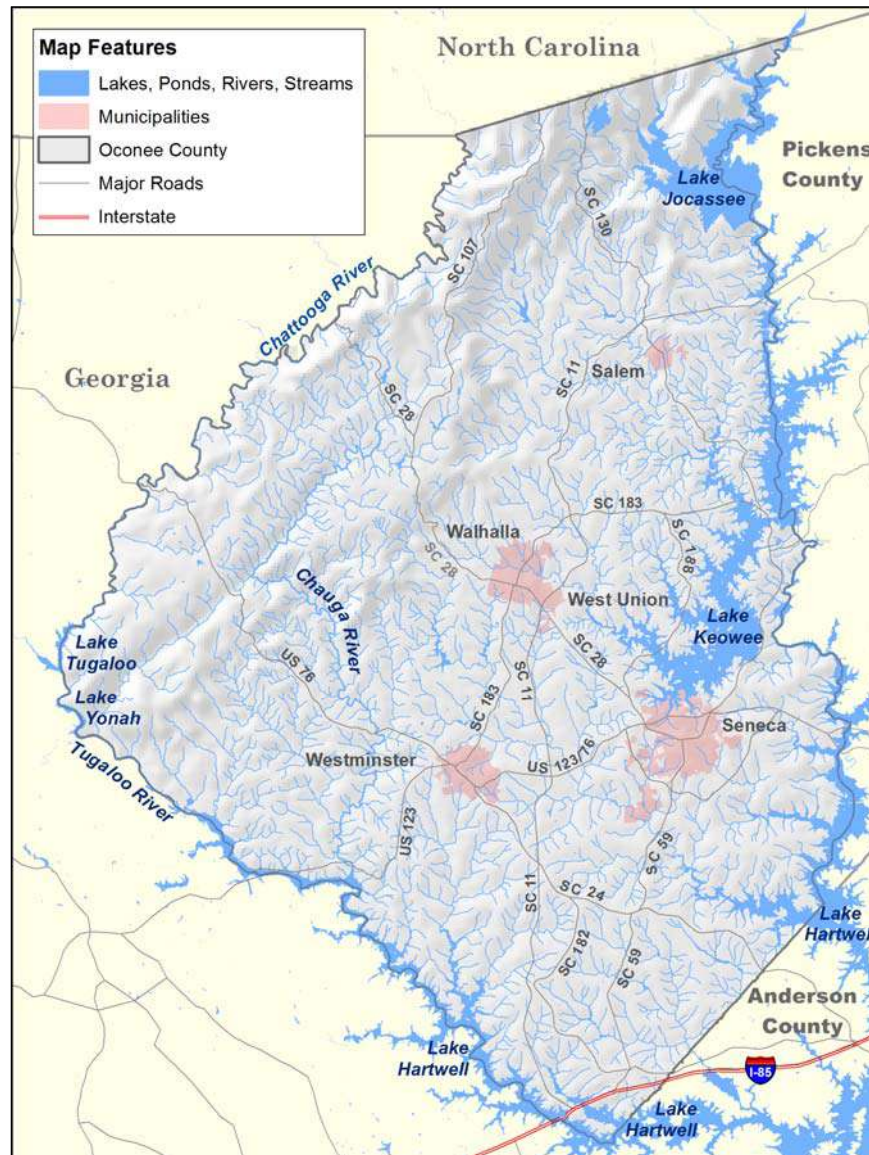
Oconee County has an abundance of surface water, generally sustained by ample rainfall, that includes several major water bodies as well as numerous rivers, creeks, ponds and streams. Surface water accounts for nearly all (99.2%) of the public water supply in Oconee County, with 4,099.88 million gallons withdrawn in 2016 (*SCDHEC, 2016 Reported Water Use in South Carolina, 2017*). An additional 45.9 million gallons of the County’s groundwater were withdrawn for irrigation use and 30.49 million gallons for golf course use. Map 6-5 illustrates the surface water resources in Oconee County.

At 56,000 acres, *Lake Hartwell* is the largest water body that extends into Oconee County. The Lake borders the County on the west, south, and east, and is fed by the Tugaloo and Seneca Rivers. The largest portion of the Lake is within Anderson County, with branches also reaching into Pickens County and three Georgia counties. The Lake was created between 1955 and 1963



through the damming of the Savannah River by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the purposes of flood risk management, water quality, water supply, downstream navigation, hydropower production, fish and wildlife protection, and recreation (*U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 2019*). Full pool elevation for Lake Hartwell is 660 feet above mean sea level, with a maximum depth of 185 feet and an average depth of 45 feet (*SCDNR, 2019*). The Lake and the Hartwell Power Plant are under the management of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps' Shoreline Management Program for Lake Hartwell provides guidelines for general uses of the Lake's public lands, including the types of permitted private uses and activities such as the construction of boat docks and underbrushing.

Map 6-5. Surface Water



Source: USGS National Hydrography Dataset, December 2018



Duke Power, now Duke Energy, developed the *Keowee-Toxaway Hydroelectric Project* to generate electricity. The project includes the Keowee Hydro and Jocassee Pumped Storage facilities. Duke Energy is the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licensee for the Keowee-Toxaway Project that includes management of Lakes Keowee and Jocassee. Duke Energy's Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) was developed to assist in guiding responsible construction, shoreline stabilization, and excavation activities within the lake boundaries of both lakes. The goal of the SMP is to provide continued public and private access to the lakes while protecting their natural resource value.

Lake Keowee was formed in 1970 by the construction of dams across the Keowee River and the Little River, creating a reservoir with two distinct halves, connected by an excavated canal. Much of 18,372-acre Lake is in Oconee County, with a northern portion also extending into Pickens County. In addition to providing hydroelectric power at the Keowee Hydro station, the Lake is a crucial source of water for cooling for the Oconee Nuclear Station. Full pool elevation at Lake Keowee is 800 feet above mean sea level (*Duke Energy, 2019*), with a maximum depth of 297 feet and average depth of 53 feet (*SCDNR, 2019*).

Lake Jocassee was created in 1973 with the construction of the Jocassee Dam and is the second lake developed as part of the Keowee-Toxaway Hydroelectric Project. Much of the 7,565-acre Lake is in the northeastern area of Oconee County, with a portion in Pickens County. A confluence of four rivers supplies Lake Jocassee - the Whitewater, Thompson, Horsepasture, and Toxaway Rivers. The Jocassee Hydro Station in the southeast corner of the Lake separates it from the beginning of Lake Keowee. When generating electricity, the Jocassee Pumped Storage Facility serves as a conventional hydroelectric station. However, the facility can also reverse its turbines and pump previously used water from Lake Keowee into Lake Jocassee. The Lake also serves as the lower reservoir for the Bad Creek Pumped Storage Facility. Full pool elevation for Lake Jocassee is 1,110 feet above mean sea level (*Duke Energy, 2019*). Average Lake dept is 157 feet, with a maximum depth of 351 feet (*SCDNR, 2019*).

Lake Tugaloo is a 597-acre lake that is fed by the Tallulah and Chattooga Rivers. The Lake was created in 1923 with the completion of the Tugaloo Dam and is the fifth lake in a six-lake series created by hydroelectric dams operated by Georgia Power that follows the original course of the Tallulah River. The Lake stretches along South Carolina's border with Georgia from the Chattooga River to its confluence with the Tallulah River and provides a portion of the western Oconee County border. The Lake is owned and operated by Georgia Power. Full pool elevation for Lake Tugaloo is 891.5 feet above mean sea level.

Lake Yonah is a 525-acre lake that was created in 1925 with the completion of the Yonah Dam and is the sixth and last lake in a series created by Georgia Power that follows the original course of the Tallulah River. Lake Yonah forms a portion of South Carolina's border with Georgia, as well as the western Oconee County border. The Tugaloo River flows through Lake Yonah and continues through Lake Hartwell before joining the Savannah River. The Lake is owned and operated by Georgia Power. Full pool elevation for Lake Yonah is 744.2 feet above mean sea level.



The *Chattooga River* forms the northwest border of Oconee County. The Chattooga is the main tributary of the Tugaloo River, flowing 57 miles from its headwaters in North Carolina to its confluence with the Tallulah River in Lake Tugaloo. The River drops nearly half a mile in elevation along the way. The Chattooga has been protected since 1974 as a National Wild and Scenic River, including the surrounding 15,432-acre corridor. Nearly 40 miles of the River are considered “wild,” meaning that these segments are relatively inaccessible. Most of the area surrounding the River is managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

The 31.3-mile *Chauga River* is a long tributary of the Tugaloo River that begins near Mountain Rest and flows to Chau Ram County Park where it merges with Ramsey Creek before flowing south to Lake Hartwell. The 45.9-mile *Tugaloo River* serves as a portion of the southwestern border of Oconee County. Formed by the Tallulah and Chattooga Rivers, the Tugaloo flows along South Carolina’s border with Georgia and through the impoundments at Lake Tugaloo, Lake Yonah, and Lake Hartwell to the Savannah River.

There are also a number of smaller lakes of various sizes throughout Oconee County. Smaller lakes include *Lake Becky* below Oconee State Park, *Lake Chattooga* near Mountain Rest, *Lake Cheohee* and *Lake Cherokee* in the northwest area of the County, *Crystal Lake* near S.C. Highway 28 above Stumphouse Tunnel, *Lake Jemiki* west of Walhalla, *Mountain Rest Lake* in Mountain Rest, and *Whitewater Lake* northwest of Salem. Many of these lakes include associated residential communities.

Several rivers and creeks of note are the *Thompson River* north of Lake Jocassee, *Brasstown Creek* that flows through the westernmost area of the County through the Sumter National Forest to the Tugaloo River, and *Coneross Creek* that begins near Stumphouse Tunnel and flows southeast to Lake Hartwell. Additional smaller rivers and streams include *Whitewater River* that flows into Lake Jocassee, *Little River* that begins above Salem and flows to Lake Keowee, *Choestoea Creek* that originates west of Westminster and flows to Lake Hartwell, *Cheohee Creek* west of Salem, *Tamassee Creek* in the Sumter National Forest west of Salem, and *Station Creek* that flows from the Sumter National Forest north of Walhalla.

2. Groundwater

Groundwater is a significant source of drinking water, particularly in rural areas, and an important source of water for manufacturing, irrigation, and power generation. Groundwater is also vital for maintaining aquatic ecosystems by recharging streams, lakes, and wetlands and sustaining surface water supplies during droughts. It is estimated that about 60% of the water in South Carolina streams originates as groundwater (*S.C. Water Plan, 2004*). However, groundwater accounts for only 2.2% of the public water supply in Oconee County, with an average of only 0.24 million gallons a day withdrawn in 2015 (*USGS National Water Information System, Water Use Data for South Carolina, 2015*).



Groundwater supplies are subject to seasonal variation and decline due to prolonged drought, but usually to a lesser degree than surface water supplies. Groundwater levels are lower during the summer due to increased pumping and reduced recharge, but usually recover during the winter and spring because of increased aquifer recharge and reduced pumping. Multi-year droughts lower aquifer water levels by limiting the recharge that normally occurs during the wet winter and spring months.

SCDHEC, SCDNR, and the South Carolina Water Science Center (SCWSC) of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) have cooperatively developed and are maintaining groundwater level monitoring networks within the major aquifers of the State. SCDNR routinely collects groundwater level data for 85 wells statewide. While SCDNR has no monitored wells in Oconee County (*SCDNR, South Carolina Groundwater Data, 2019*), the U.S. Geological Survey monitors the water level of a well located off of Station Creek southeast of Oconee State Park on a daily basis (*USGS Groundwater Watch, 2019*).

3. Public Water Supply

More than 10.8 million gallons of water are withdrawn in Oconee County each day by water suppliers. This water is conveyed for uses including domestic, commercial, industrial and public water use. Of the water withdrawn, 10.58 million gallons per day were drawn from surface water sources such as lakes, rivers, and streams and 0.24 million gallons per day from groundwater sources located beneath the earth's surface (*USGS National Water Information System, Water Use Data for South Carolina, 2015*).

Water is provided to Oconee County residents by 21 *community water systems* (Table 6-7). Community water systems serve the same customers in residences or businesses year-round. Six of these systems are public systems that serve nearly 75,700 residents and 15 are private systems serving more than 8,100 residents.

Additional water systems serving Oconee County residents include one *non-transient, non-community water system* and 35 *transient, non-community water systems* (*US EPA Envirofacts, SDWIS, 2019*). Non-transient, non-community water systems provide water for uses that serve the same people, but not year-round, such as schools that have their own water systems. Transient, non-community water systems provide water for uses that do not consistently serve the same users year-round such as rest stops, campgrounds, and gas stations.



Table 6-7. Community Water Systems in Oconee County

Water System Name	Primary Water Source Type	Population Served
Public Community Water Systems		
City of Seneca	Surface water (Lake Keowee)	33,374
City of Walhalla	Surface water (tributaries of Coneross Creek)	15,740
City of Westminster	Surface water (Chauga River)	7,582
Pioneer Rural Water District	Surface water purchased	16,236
Town of Salem	Surface water purchased	2,278
Town of West Union	Surface water purchased	468
Private Community Water Systems		
Bay Ridge Subdivision	Ground water	62
Camp Ghigau	Ground water	35
Cherokee Creek Boys School	Ground water	26
Chickasaw Point	Surface water purchased	490
Harts Cove and Tory Pointe	Surface water purchased	560
Highpointe at Clemson	Surface water purchased	864
Isaqueena Point Utility System	Surface water purchased	36
Keowee Bay Subdivision	Ground water	115
Keowee Key Utility System Inc.	Surface water purchased	3,602
Port Bass I	Ground water	590
Port Bass II	Ground water	178
Tesi-Foxwood Hills	Surface water purchased	1,226
Timber Lake I	Ground water	202
Timber Lake II	Ground water	96
Turtlehead Subdivision	Ground water	32

Source: U.S. EPA, Envirofacts, Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS), January 2019

4. River Basins and Sub-basins

The precipitation that falls in South Carolina is drained by four major river systems – the Pee Dee, Santee, Ashley-Combahee-Edisto, and Savannah River Basins. The streams and rivers that drain each region are collectively called drainage basins. These basins generally traverse the State from the northwest to the southeast. The distribution of these systems is a key factor in the geographic disparity in water supply and demand that exists among regions.

Oconee County is located within the *Savannah River Basin*. The basin includes a small portion of North Carolina and all of the land in South Carolina and Georgia that drains to the Savannah River. In South Carolina, the Savannah River Basin is described in two sections – the Upper Savannah River Basin that includes Oconee County and the Lower Savannah River Basin. The Upper Savannah River Basin encompasses seven watersheds and 1,164 square miles (744.8 acres). There are approximately 1,341 stream miles and 43,677 acres of lake waters in the basin.



In Oconee County, the Savannah River Basin is further divided into the *Tugaloo River* and *Seneca River* sub-basins. SCDHEC describes the two eight-digit sub-basins as the Tugaloo/Seneca River Basin (hydrologic units 03060102 and 03050101). The Tugaloo/Seneca River Basin is located in Oconee, Anderson, and Pickens Counties and encompasses 12 watersheds and 1,269 square miles, extending into Georgia and North Carolina. There are approximately 3,832 stream miles and 67,532 acres of lake waters in the two sub-basins. Map 6-6 depicts the sub-basins and watersheds in Oconee County.

Map 6-6. River Sub-basins and Watersheds



Source: USDA, Geo Spatial Data Gateway, February 2019

A watershed is a geographic area into which the surrounding waters, precipitation, sediments, and dissolved materials drain and flow to a single outlet. Watershed resources include both groundwater and surface water, making watershed protection vital to preserving water quality. As water flows across or under a watershed on its way to a lake, river, or stream, it is exposed to



potential contaminants in the form of stormwater runoff and other pollutants. Development of natural areas can adversely impact water quality through the replacement of vegetation and forests with impervious surfaces.

Oconee County is impacted by nine watersheds – five located in the Seneca River Sub-basin and four in the Tugaloo River Sub-basin (Map 6-6). The Chauga, Coneross, and Little River-Lake Keowee watersheds cover substantial areas within the County. Detailed watershed data including the impacted counties, primary water bodies, and coverage area is included in Table 6-8.

Table 6-8. Watersheds in Oconee County

Watershed	Counties; State	Primary Waterbodies	Area (acres)	Stream Miles	Lake/Pond Waters (acres)
Seneca River Sub-basin (03060101)					
Keowee River-Lake Jocassee (03060101-01)	Oconee, Pickens and NC	Keowee River and its tributaries flowing through and forming Lake Jocassee	93,945 (31,875 in SC)	229.7	8,490.2
Keowee River-Lake Keowee (03060101-02)	Oconee, Pickens and NC	Keowee River and its tributaries from Lake Jocassee Dam to Keowee Dam forming Lake Keowee	79,952 (78,837 in SC)	309.8	7,598.2
Little River-Lake Keowee (03060101-03)	Oconee	Little River and its tributaries as is flows through Lake Keowee	104,996	339.5	9,758.4
Coneross Creek (03060101-05)	Oconee	Coneross Creek and its tributaries, which form an arm of Lake Hartwell	68,125	236.4	2,304.2
Hartwell Lake-Seneca River (03060101-08)	Oconee, Pickens, Anderson	Seneca River arm of Lake Hartwell	68,085	170.6	13,028.6
Tugaloo River Sub-basin (03060102)					
Chattooga River (03060102-02)	Oconee and NC/Georgia	Chattooga River and its tributaries	178,648 (34,895 in SC)	570.6	629.3
Chauga River (03060102-03)	Oconee	Chauga River and its tributaries	70,770	323.4	456.3
Hartwell Lake-Upper Tugaloo River (03060102-04)	Oconee and Georgia	Upper Tugaloo River and its tributaries from its origin in the Chauga River	83,089 (27,005 in SC)	259.7	2,288.6
Hartwell Lake-Lower Tugaloo River (03060102-05)	Oconee, Anderson	Lower Tugaloo River and its tributaries from Chauga River through Lake Hartwell	179,670 (84,992 in SC)	544.1	17,041.2

Source: SCDHEC, Watersheds, February 2019

5. Water Quality

South Carolina’s abundant water supply has been a key resource in the development and growth of the State’s economy. The quantity of this water supply is integral to future community and



regional development efforts, while the health and safety of residents depends on the quality of these resources. Although overall water quality is good in most parts of the State, increased urbanization and a growing population have contributed to rising levels of point source and non-point source pollution. Sustained growth will place greater demand on the water supply and make the protection of water resources a long-term priority.

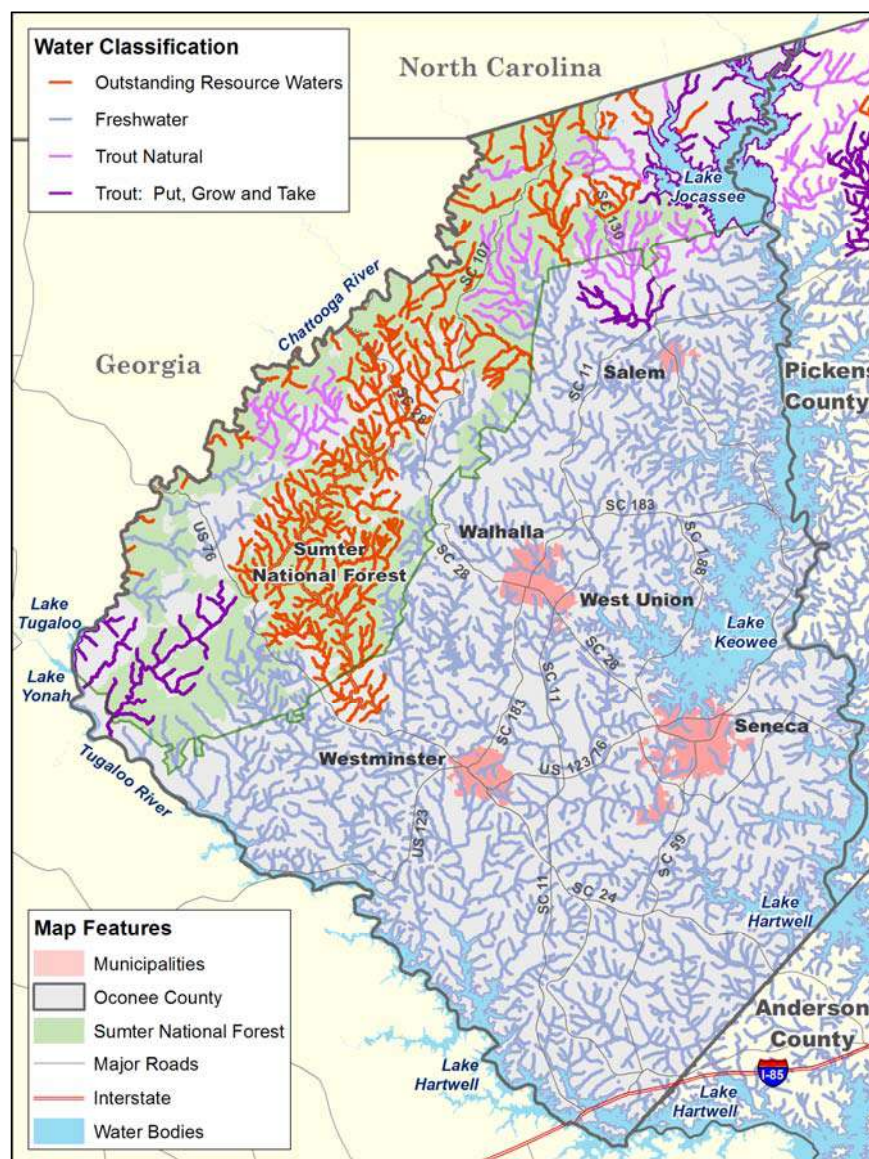
Section 208 of the Federal Clean Water Act, as passed in 1972 and amended in 1987, established criteria for a regionally integrated approach to addressing surface water quality protection. The State of South Carolina continues to use regional planning agencies throughout much of the State as a means of administering these requirements. In 1978, the Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG) was designated as the water quality management planning agency for a six-county region that includes Cherokee, Greenville, Pickens, Oconee, and Anderson County. As the designated planning agency, the ACOG is responsible for updating and amending the *Water Quality Management Plan* (WQMP) that identifies policy priorities and recommendations for water quality management across the region. The most recent update of the *Appalachian Regional Water Quality Plan* was adopted by Council in 2011.

The SCDHEC Bureau of Water has developed a *Watershed Water Quality Assessment* for each major river basin in the State. Included in each assessment is an in-depth description of the watershed and its resources; an analysis of surface water quality, an analysis of groundwater quality; a listing of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits; the Nonpoint Source (NPS) pollution management, water quantity and usage, growth potential within each watershed related to wastewater needs; watershed protection and restoration strategies; and available state and citizen-based watershed stewardship programs. Updates to Watershed Water Quality Assessments for South Carolina river basins can be found online in the SCDHEC *SC Watershed Atlas*. While more complete assessments of local water quality are included in the SCDHEC data, pertinent findings for Oconee County water quality are summarized in this section.

Statewide standards have been established to protect the suitable uses indicated in each classification and to maintain and improve water quality. The standards determine permit limits for treated wastewater dischargers and any other activities that may impact water quality. As illustrated in Map 6-7, most waters in Oconee County are classified as *Fresh Water* by SCDHEC. Per SCDHEC *Regulation 61-68 – Water Classification and Standards*, fresh waters are suitable for primary and secondary contact recreation (swimming, water skiing, boating, and wading), for industrial and agricultural uses, and as sources of drinking water supply after conventional treatment. Fresh waters are also suitable for fishing and provide a suitable environment for the survival and propagation of a balanced aquatic community of flora and fauna.



Map 6-7. Water Classification in Oconee County



Source: SCDHEC, S.C. Watershed Atlas, 2019

Many of the waters in the Sumter National Forest, as well a portion of the Chauga River and some of its tributaries that extend beyond SNF, are classified as *Outstanding Resource Waters*. Outstanding Resource Waters are “of exceptional recreational or ecological importance or of unusual value.” Such waters may include, but are not limited to, “waters in national or state parks or wildlife refuges; waters supporting threatened or endangered species; waters under the *National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act* or *South Carolina Scenic Rivers Act*; waters known to be significant nursery areas for commercially important species or known to contain significant commercial or public shellfish resources; or waters used for or having significant value for scientific research and study.”



Some waters in the Sumter National Forest, as well as a few outside of the SNF just above Salem, are freshwaters that have also been recognized by SCDHEC as trout waters. *Trout Natural* waters are suitable for supporting reproducing trout populations. The waters are also suitable for primary and secondary contact recreation and fishing, as a source of drinking water supply after conventional treatment, and industrial and agricultural uses. The criteria for *Trout: Put, Grow, and Take* waters are similar to those of the Trout Natural Waters, however these waters are also suitable for supporting the growth of stocked trout populations.

a. NPDES Permitted Activities

As authorized by the *Clean Water Act of 1972*, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program reduces water pollution by regulating point sources that discharge pollutants into waters. Point sources are discrete conveyances such as pipes or man-made ditches. Individual homes that are connected to a municipal system, use a septic system, or do not have a surface discharge are exempt from NPDES permitting. However, industrial, municipal, and other facilities must obtain permits to discharge directly into surface waters. Accordingly, discharges from wastewater treatment systems owned by governments, private utilities, and industries are required to obtain NPDES permits.

Wastewater facilities are monitored by SCDHEC regional offices of Environmental Quality Control for compliance with NPDES permits. SCDHEC issues permits for *municipal* facilities (municipal utilities), *domestic* facilities (private utilities), and *industrial* facilities (industrial pump and haul operations that generate non-hazardous process wastewater and domestic wastewater generated at industrial facilities). Table 6-9 lists permitted NPDES facilities in Oconee County, sorted by type of activity.

Table 6-9. NPDES Permitted Facilities in Oconee County, 2019

Facility Name	Watershed	Description (SIC)
Municipal		
City of Seneca WTP	030601010305	Water Supply
City of Walhalla Coneross Creek WTP	030601010502	Water Supply
Oconee County Coneross Creek WWTF	030601010502	Sewerage System
Domestic		
Chickasaw Association Inc/Chickasaw Pointe Subdivision	030601020507	Operator of Dwellings other than Apartment Buildings
Chickasaw Utilities/Chickasaw Point	030601020502	Combination Utilities, NEC
Clemson University WWTF	030601010803	Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools
SCPRT I-85 Info and Rest Area	030601020507	Miscellaneous Personal Services, NEC
Keowee Key Utility Systems Inc	030601010304	Operators of Dwellings Other Than Apartment Buildings
SCPRT Oconee State Park	030601020301	Amusement and Recreation Services, NEC
Tamassee DAR School	030601010301	Elementary and Secondary Schools



Table 6-9. NPDES Permitted Facilities in Oconee County, 2019

Facility Name	Watershed	Description (SIC)
Total Environ/Foxwood Hills Subdivision	030601020502	Operators of Dwellings Other Than Apartment Buildings
West-Oak High School/Oconee County School District	030601020502	Elementary and Secondary Schools
Industrial		
Clemson University/Central Energy	030601010803	Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools
Duke Energy/Oconee Nuclear	030601010802	Electric Services
Duke Energy/Oconee Nuclear	030601010802	Electric Services
Duke Energy/Oconee Nuclear	030601010802	Electric Services
Duke Energy/Oconee Nuclear	030601010204	Electric Services
Greenfield Industries Inc. Seneca	030601010803	Metal Sanitary ware
Koyo Bearings USA	030601010305	Ball and roller bearings
Oconee County Rock Quarry	030601010501	---
Sandvick, Inc.	030601010502	Cutting Tools, Machine Tool Accessories
SCDNR Walhalla Fish Hatchery	030601020204	Fish Hatcheries and Preserves
Thrift Group/Thrift Brothers Mine	030601010803	Miscellaneous Nonmetallic Minerals
Tyco Healthcare/Kendall	030601010305	Orthopedic, Prosthetic, and Surgical Appliances and Supplies
WP Prop Clemson/Clemson Finishing Plant	030601010803	Finishers of Textiles, NEC

Source: SCDHEC GIS Clearinghouse, February 2019

b. Water Quality Monitoring

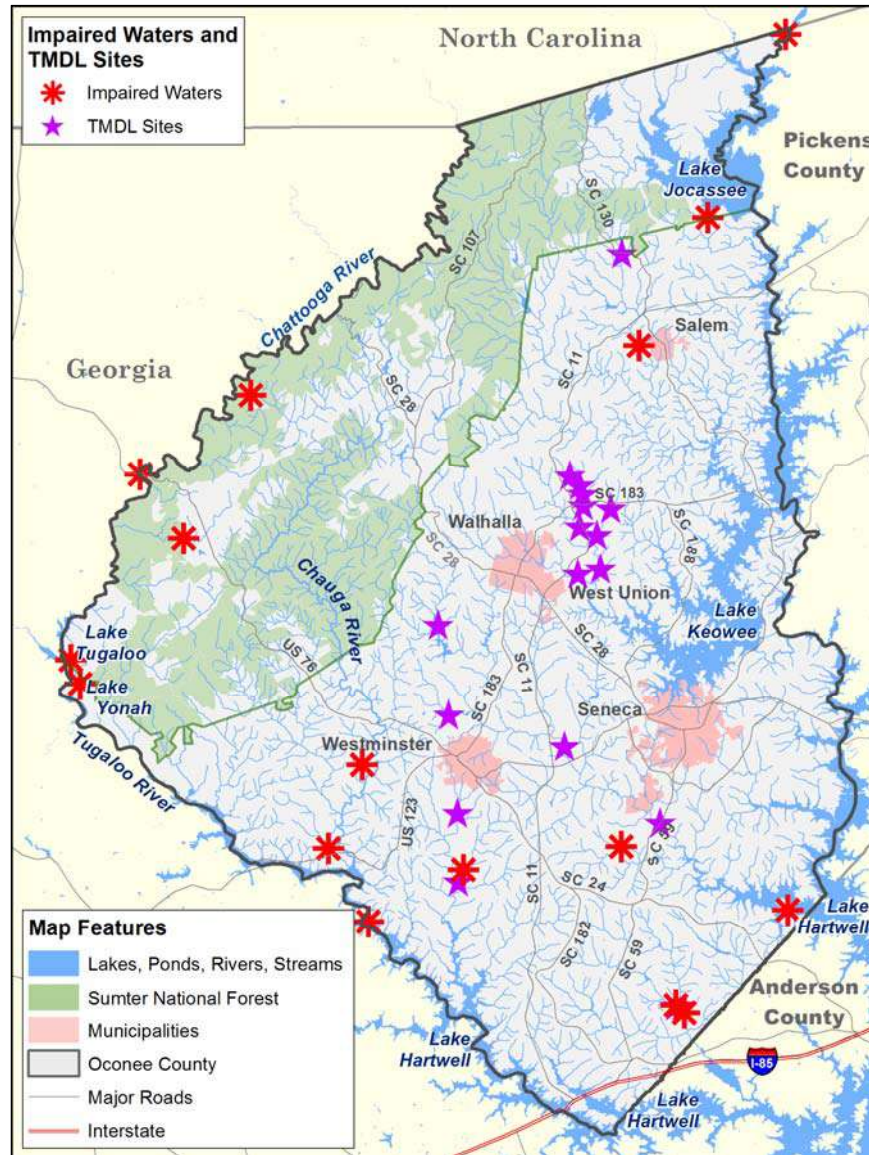
SCDHEC evaluates water quality through the collection of data from a statewide network of primary and secondary ambient monitoring stations supplemented by rotating watershed monitoring stations. Network data is used to determine long-term water quality trends and attainment of water quality standards, identify locations that warrant attention, and plan and evaluate stream classifications and standards. Data is also used to formulate permit limits for wastewater discharges in accordance with State and Federal water quality standards and the goals of the *Clean Water Act*. Assessments of water quality monitoring data for watersheds are regularly updated and published on the Department's *SC Watershed Atlas* website.

SCDHEC prepares a bi-annual list of impaired waters in compliance with *Section 303(d)* of the U.S. EPA *Clean Water Act*. The list is based on a five-year data compilation from multiple water quality monitoring stations in major and secondary waterbodies in Oconee County, along with data gathered from other qualified sources. Impaired waterbodies appearing on the 303(d) list do not meet water quality standards. The most recent list in *The State of South Carolina's 2018 Integrated Report* includes 16 locations in Oconee County (Map 6-8). Once a site is included in the 303(d) list of impaired waters, a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) must be developed by SCDHEC and approved by the EPA. TMDL refers both to the amount of a single pollutant entering



a waterbody on a daily basis and to an associated document and implementation plan with specific measures to improve water quality and attain water quality standards. TMDL implementation has the potential to reduce pollution sources within a watershed and restore full use of the waterbody. Sites covered under an approved TMDL are also shown in Map 6-8.

Map 6-8. Impaired Waters and TMDL Sites in Oconee County



Source: SCDHEC GIS Clearinghouse, February 2019

c. Nonpoint Source Pollution

Nonpoint source (NPS) pollution is untraceable to a single origin or source. Such pollution includes fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, animal waste, sediment, pathogens, household wastewater from failing septic systems, and contaminants such as street litter carried into water sources by urban runoff. Runoff occurring after a rain event transports pollutants to the nearest



waterbody or storm drain where they can impact water quality in creeks, rivers, lakes, estuaries, and wetlands. NPS pollution can also impact groundwater when it seeps into aquifers. Adverse effects of NPS pollution include physical destruction of aquatic habitat, fish kills and closure of fishing areas, limitations on recreational use, reduced water supply, taste and odor problems in drinking water, and increased potential for flooding when waterbodies become choked with sediment.

To comply with the Federal *Clean Water Act*, the State of South Carolina manages several programs to reduce the impact of non-point source pollution. The State's Non-point Source Management Program provides a framework for addressing the major causes and sources of nonpoint source pollution. SCDHEC is the responsible agency for nonpoint source monitoring as part of its biannual assessment of the condition of the State's waters. Nonpoint sources monitored by SCDHEC include mining operations, livestock operations, agriculture, landfills, and land applications of effluent from wastewater treatment facilities. Multiple facilities are monitored under the SCDHEC Nonpoint Source Management Program within Oconee County watersheds. Up-to-date mapping and information for these facilities are found online in the *SC Watershed Atlas*.

SCDHEC also regulates stormwater activity in Oconee County. The County has adopted complimentary drainage and stormwater requirements that require review of proposed developments to ensure that all stormwater runoff is removed to perpetually maintained drainage systems, stormwater drainage systems are separated from sanitary sewer systems, there is adequate provision for storm or floodwater channels or basins, and other provisions designed to protect properties.

Local and regional water quality management efforts recognize that the quality of the water supply is directly linked to development activities, demand, and land use practices within the watershed. When considering water quality in the comprehensive planning process, it is important to incorporate measures that protect valuable water resources from excessive runoff and discharge that may create unsafe levels of dangerous chemicals or bacteria. Attention to stormwater retention, percentage of impervious surfaces within developments, and industrial discharge are critical to ensuring water quality in Oconee County.

6. Lake and River Protection

A number of public and private entities are involved in shoreline and river corridor management in Oconee County.

a. Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee Shoreline Management

Duke Energy is the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licensee for the Keowee-Toxaway Hydroelectric Project that includes the Jocassee and Keowee development in Upstate South Carolina and Western North Carolina. FERC licensees must supervise and manage shoreline

development to ensure consistency with project purposes, including protection and enhancement of scenic, recreational, cultural and other environmental values. Duke Energy developed a Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) to assist in guiding responsible construction, shoreline stabilization, and excavation activities within the lake boundaries of Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee. The goal of the SMP is to provide continued public and private access to these reservoirs while protecting and enhancing their natural resource values.

Any occupancy or use of land and waters within the project boundaries of Lake Jocassee and Lake Keowee requires prior written authorization by Duke Energy's Lake Services department. The project boundary for Lake Keowee follows the 800-to-810 foot contour elevation around the Lake. The Lake Jocassee project boundary follows the 1,110-to-1,120 foot contour elevation around the Lake (*FERC, Duke Energy License Renewal, 2016*).

Duke Energy manages uses within the project boundary, including marinas, piers, residential access from lots adjacent to the Lake boundary, clearing or cutting trees or other vegetation, shoreline stabilization measures (rip-rap, seawalls), excavation, bridges, and line crossings. Miscellaneous uses such as fish attractors and water ski courses must also apply for a permit. A number of activities are not allowed within the project boundaries of the Lakes such as the planting of non-native species, septic tanks and fields, stormwater pipes, littering, washing and painting of watercraft (except with biodegradable detergents), any part of a permanent dwelling, swimming pools, camping, kennels and pens for pets, fences, and aquaculture operations.

Protection of the riparian zone, or vegetated area adjacent to the Lakes, is required by Duke Energy. The riparian zone provides critical habitat for fish and wildlife, helps reduce erosion of soils into the water, and serves as a filter for runoff of fertilizers and other chemicals. Removal of vegetation from the project boundary is allowed only by prior written authorization.

b. Keowee-Toxaway Habitat Enhancement Program

The Keowee-Toxaway Habitat Enhancement Program (KTHEP) provides funding to enhance, create, and protect fish and wildlife habitats within the watersheds and along Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee. Established in accordance with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license for the Keowee-Toxaway Hydro Project and as part of its Shoreline Management Plan, the program is a cooperative effort by Duke Energy and stakeholders including Oconee County, SCDNR, and the S.C. Wildlife Federation. KTHEP is funded through the Habitat Enhancement Fund with fees paid by property owners and developers who apply for lake use permits. Funds are awarded through a competitive grant application process to government agencies and nonprofit organizations, with awards typically ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000. Recent recipients include Oconee County, the Friends of Lake Keowee Society, Keep Oconee Beautiful, Clemson University, SCDNR, and the Nature Conservancy of South Carolina. In 2019, KTHEP funding totaled more than \$1.4 million (Duke Energy, Lake Services, April 2019). Since 2015, the program has provided more than \$450,000 to support fish and avian habitat improvements. Recent awards include shoreline restoration projects in the South Cove County Park and on Lake Keowee, construction of



walkways to reduce erosion and install native plants at Devils Fork State Park, an elementary school curriculum that focuses on protection of land and water resources, restoration of fire-dependent habitats in the Jocassee Gorges, habitat and stock enhancement for native fishes in a headwater tributary of Lake Keowee, and prescribed fire implementation in the Keowee and Jocassee watersheds.

b. Lake Hartwell Shoreline Management

The Lake Hartwell shoreline is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to promote safe and healthful use while maintaining environmental safeguards that will ensure a quality resource for future generations. The primary objective of the Hartwell Project Shoreline Management Program is the preservation of public access and use while maintaining a balance between permitted private uses and the long-term protection of lake resources. The prescribed boundary for Lake Hartwell shoreline is the 670-foot contour elevation. While the Corps maintains identifying markers for the boundary line, it is the responsibility of landowners to identify the boundary location on their specific property.

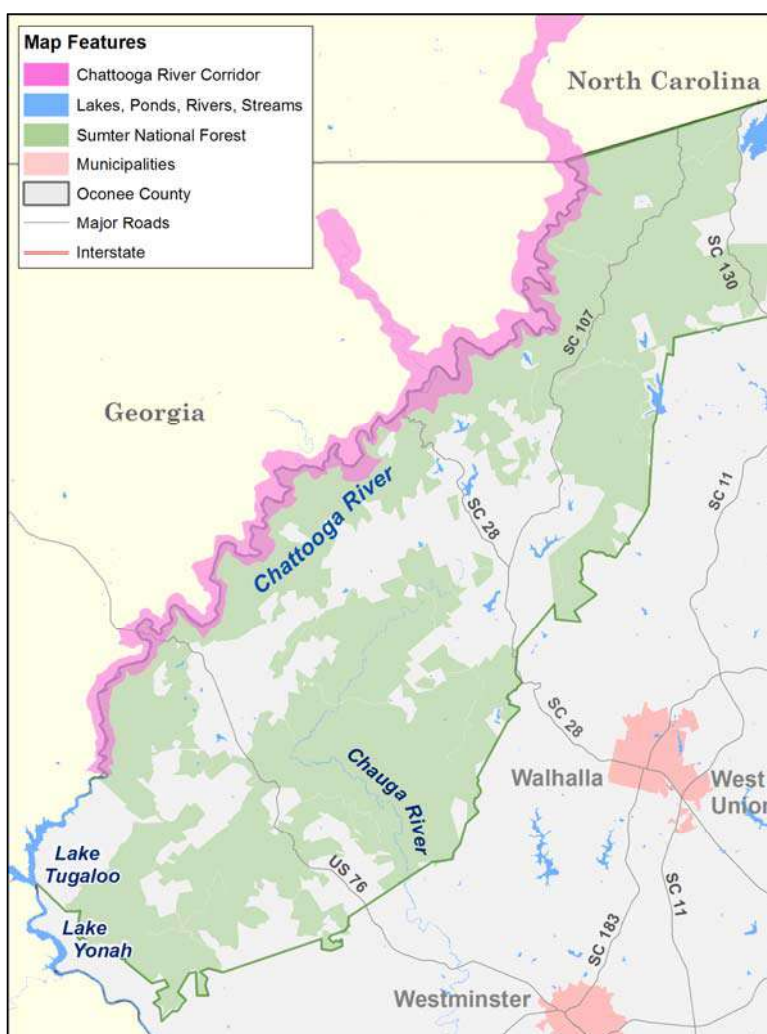
The SMP includes shoreline allocations that are intended to manage the type, number, and location of private facilities and activities on public land and water. Approximately 50% of the shoreline is in Limited Development Areas, which allow private docks and certain land-based activities. Approximately 26% of the shoreline is in Protected Shoreline Areas intended to reduce conflicts between public and private use and maintain aesthetics, fish and wildlife habitat, cultural, or other environmental values. Docks, improved walkways, and utility rights-of-way are generally prohibited in these areas. Approximately 24% of the shoreline is in Public Recreation Areas that are designated for Federal, State, and other public use, including commercial concessions. No private use facilities or activities are allowed in these areas. Less than one percent of the shoreline is in Prohibited Access Areas, where public boating, pedestrian access, and private use facilities and activities are either not allowed or restricted for safety and security reasons.

Shoreline use permits/licenses, also known as consolidated permits, must be obtained before the installation or use of any facility or the implementation of any action on project land or water. Permits can be considered for boat docks, underbrushing, utility rights-of-way, improved walkways, and bank stabilization. Shoreline use permits/licenses are issued for a five-year term and do not convey if the property is sold or transferred to a new owner. The construction of new roads, ramps, turnarounds, land-based boathouses, marine ways, fixed gangwalks, pump houses, picnic shelters, and patios within the Lake boundary is prohibited, though repairs may be made on existing facilities. The Corps also maintains a list of approved plants that may be used within the Lake boundary area.

c. Chattooga River Land and Resource Management

Designated as one of the Nation’s first Wild and Scenic Rivers in 1974, the 57-mile Chattooga River is one of the longest free-flowing rivers in the southeast. The River is bordered by three National Forests – the Sumter National Forest in South Carolina, the Nantahala in North Carolina, and the Chattahoochee-Oconee in Georgia. The U.S. Forest Service is responsible for the management of the 15,432-acre Chattooga Wild and Scenic River Corridor, of which 4,544 acres are in South Carolina (Map 6-9). Sumter National Forest is the lead authority for all boating and floating use on the Chattooga River on the main channel from Burrel’s Ford to Lake Tugaloo, as well as the West Fork.

Table 6-9. Chattooga River Corridor



Source: USDA National Forest Service, FSGeodata Clearinghouse, 2019

The *Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for Sumter National Forest* includes a number of standards for the Chattooga River Corridor that provide direction for on-river and in- corridor recreation capacity and address water quality issues within the watershed. The Plan does not



allow motorized watercraft on the River or floating upstream of S.C. Highway 28. Trip size (persons and watercraft) and frequency is also regulated. Only three companies are commercially licensed by the U.S. Forest Service to operate on the two more difficult and dangerous sections of the Chattooga River.

Access to the 3,290 acres of the Chattooga designated as *Wild* in South Carolina is limited to non-motorized trails. This is considered to be the most primitive and remote segment, with restrictions that protect and preserve the natural environment and processes from human influences. While the 224 acres of the River in South Carolina designated as *Scenic* are slightly more developed than the *Wild* segments, the River's shorelines are undeveloped with limited road or bridge crossings, parking areas, and trailheads. A range of recreational opportunities that complement the natural setting are provided in the 1,030 acres along the River designated as *Recreational*. The River is readily accessible by road in these areas with parking areas, signage, restrooms, boat launches, fishing platforms, and picnic sites. Camping is permitted at any location within the Chattooga River Corridor that is at least 50 feet from the River or any stream or trail and at least one-quarter mile from any road. Several designated campsites with fire rings are located at sites along the Chattooga Trail.

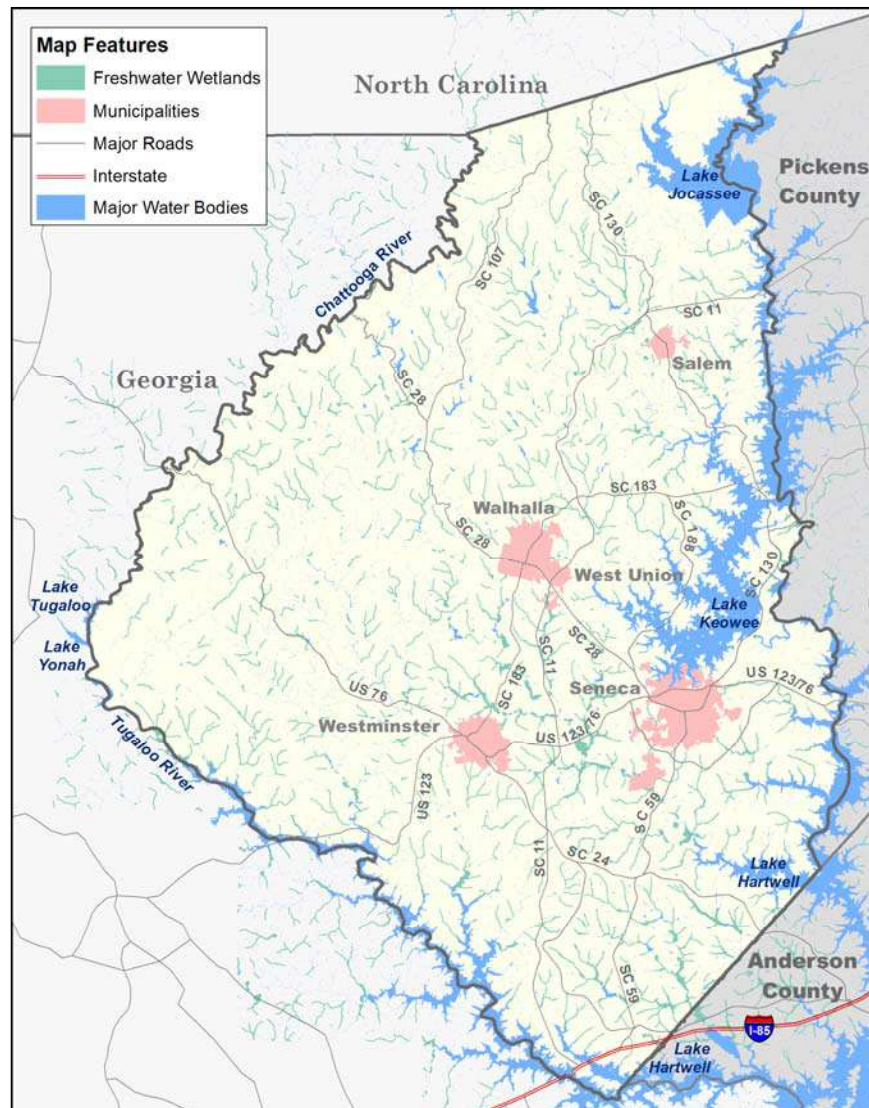
d. Oconee County Lake Overlay District

Oconee County created a *Lake Overlay District* as an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance in 2012 to protect water quality, maintain natural beauty, and limit secondary impacts of new development on residents living near lakeshores. The Overlay is also intended to ensure the enjoyment of the Lakes by all residents. Lake Overlay District boundaries are applied to Lake Jocassee and Lake Keowee as shown in Map 6-10. Measurements for lake boundaries used in conjunction with the Overlay District are based on full pond levels of 800 feet above mean sea level on Lake Keowee and 1,110 feet above mean sea level on Lake Jocassee.

A natural vegetative buffer of 25 feet from full pond level is required from the lakeshore. Within the buffer, no trees larger than six-inch caliber can be removed unless certified to be a hazard, and new manicured lawns or managed spaces cannot be established. A view lane of no more than 15% of the natural buffer area is allowed and trees may be limbed up to 50% of their height. No development activity or soil disturbance can occur in buffer areas, with buffer protection required during construction or development. The preservation of existing natural vegetation is encouraged. The Lake Overlay District prohibits a net density of greater than two dwelling units per acre in both single-family and multi-family development, and building height for structures must be no greater than 65 feet above finished grade. Marinas and commercial boat storage cannot be located within a mile radius of an existing subdivision. Proposed non-residential projects must be reviewed as a Special Exception by the Board of Zoning Appeals.

normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Freshwater wetlands store excess stormwater, mitigating the impact of flooding, purifying water by holding and breaking down pollutants, and trapping silt and soil to reduce clogging of nearby streams. Some wetlands store water in the rainy season and release the water later into nearby aquifers or underground streams, recharging the groundwater that supplies many South Carolinians with drinking water.

Map 6-11. Wetlands in Oconee County



Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wetlands Inventory, 2019

Wetlands are susceptible to naturally occurring changes and the negative human impacts of urban development. Development activities such as pond construction, filling, draining of lands for farming, and pollution have resulted in wetland loss or degradation. The loss of wetlands, especially through filling, increases runoff and impairs beneficial functions of flood control, groundwater recharge, and water quality improvement. Total wetlands acreage in South Carolina



has declined by one-quarter since the late 1700s, primarily as a result of human activities (*USGS National Water Summary on Wetlands Resources, 2016*).

Freshwater, forested wetlands now comprise approximately 80% of the State's wetlands. National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) data indicates the presence of wetlands in the vicinity of creeks and streams throughout Oconee County (Map 6-11). Factors considered in wetlands designation include the presence of hydric soils, hydrophytic vegetation, and hydrological conditions that involve a temporary or permanent source of water that can cause soil saturation. However, NWI data is generated on a large scale, necessitating that the exact location of any wetlands be determined on a parcel-by-parcel basis.

E. NATURAL HAZARDS

Natural hazards endanger the health and safety of community residents, jeopardize economic vitality and imperil environmental quality. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) encourages local governments to initiate mitigation actions to reduce or eliminate the risks to humans and property from natural hazards. The *Anderson and Oconee Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan* was most recently updated and adopted in August 2018. The Plan identifies the hazards that threaten the two counties and provides estimates of the relative risks posed to each community by these hazards. This is supported by a set of goals, objectives, strategies, and actions that guide mitigation activities, with a detailed plan for implementation and monitoring.

While Oconee County is vulnerable to a number of natural hazards, it ranks 14th lowest among the State's 46 counties in terms of both the number of past natural hazards and future probability of natural hazards (*South Carolina Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2018*). The Plan identifies winter storms as the top hazard faced by Oconee County in recent decades, followed by lightning and severe storms, tornados and high winds, floods, drought and heat wave, hail, and thunderstorms.

1. Winter Storms

Winter storms include snow, sleet, ice, and cold temperatures, and can range from moderate precipitation lasting only a few hours to blizzard conditions. Many winter storms are accompanied by low temperatures, some resulting in temperatures below freezing. Agricultural production can be seriously impacted when temperatures remain below the freezing point for an extended period of time.

These storms are often accompanied by sleet and freezing rain. Ice storms occur when freezing rain falls and freezes immediately upon impact forming a glaze of ice. Even small accumulations of ice cause a significant hazard, especially on sidewalks and roads, power lines, and trees, that can disrupt transportation, communications, and power for days. A winter weather event is considered notable when it causes \$50,000 or more in combined property and crop damages.

The County's Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan reports a 50% probability of one or more winter weather events in any one-year time frame, resulting in a moderate level of vulnerability for these storms. The Plan lists 28 notable winter storm events that impacted Oconee County from 1960 through 2015, with the most costly events in terms of property damage occurring in 1973 and 1979. The *NOAA Storm Events Database* also reports two winter storms in 2016 and two in 2017. Past events indicate that winter storms can cause significant property damage and disruption of daily life and commercial operations.

2. Severe Thunderstorms with Lightning and Hail

A thunderstorm is a rainstorm event that is classified as severe when at least one of the following occurs: wind speeds exceed 58 miles per hour, tornadoes develop, or hail exceeds 0.75 inches in diameter (*S.C. Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2018*). Accompanying lightning can cause injury and death, as well as structural and equipment damage.

Oconee County has a moderate level of vulnerability to lightning and severe thunderstorms, with a 41.8% probability of occurrence of these events within any one-year time frame (*Anderson and Oconee County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2018*). There were 23 notable lightning severe storms/thunderstorms (causing \$50,000 or more in damage) recorded in Oconee County from 1960 through 2015. These storms caused more than \$8.2 million in property damage and \$2 million in crop damage, cumulatively. Since 2015 there has one recorded lightning event - in Westminster in 2017 (*NOAA Storm Events Database, February 2019*).

One of the three criteria of a severe thunderstorm is that it includes hail larger than 0.75 inches in diameter. Because of its association with severe storms, hail can occur year-round and in any location. While hail can be very small, it can also be as large as a grapefruit or softball and capable of damaging property and injuring or killing animals and people (*S.C. Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2018*). The County's Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan predicts a 12.7% probability that more than one hail producing storm will occur in the County in a one-year time frame.

There were seven notable hail storms/thunderstorms (with \$50,000 or more in damage) reported from 1960 through 2015 in Oconee County. These storms caused \$1.06 million in property damage and more than \$480,000 in crop damage. The largest recorded hail size in Oconee County was three inches in April 2002 (*Anderson and Oconee County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2018*). This hail and thunderstorm event was also the most costly to date in Oconee County, resulting in \$658,747 in property damage. Hail two inches in size was reported in Oconee County in June 2014. Fourteen additional hail events have been reported in Oconee from 2016 to the present (*NOAA Storm Events Database, February 2019*).

3. Tornadoes and High Winds

Tornadoes are violent windstorms characterized by a twisting, funnel shaped cloud that extends to the ground. They are often generated by thunderstorm activity, but are also associated with



hurricanes and tropical storms. Tornadoes are more likely to occur during the spring and early summer months of March through May. They are most likely to form in the late afternoon and early evening. Although most tornadoes are a few dozen yards wide and touch down briefly, some can carve a path more than a mile wide and several miles long.

The National Weather Service reports that tornado wind speeds range from 40 miles per hour to more than 300 miles per hour. While tornado damage is generally the result of high winds and wind-blown debris, tornadoes are often accompanied by potentially damaging lightning or large hail. The destruction caused by tornadoes depends on the intensity, size, and duration of the storm. The most significant damage is typically to structures of light construction such as manufactured homes, with generally localized impacts. Since 1950, there have been 47 casualties and 1,057 persons have been injured by tornadoes in South Carolina, with an average of eleven tornadoes a year (*S.C. Emergency Management Division, 2019*).

Eighteen notable tornadoes (with \$50,000 or more in damage) were reported in Oconee County from 1960 through 2015, resulting in more than \$7 million in property damage, \$5.1 in crop damage, 15 injuries, and one death (*Anderson and Oconee County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2018*). NOAA data indicates no recorded tornadoes since 2015 in the County. The strongest tornado to impact Oconee County to date was on March 27, 1994 when an F3 tornado touched down in the Long Creek area, causing 12 injuries, \$4.8 million in property damage, and nearly \$4 million in crop damage. The most recent tornado event was reported on October 10, 2014, when an EF0 tornado briefly touched down near Westminster, with damage limited to a number of uprooted trees (*NOAA Storm Events Database, February 2019*). A high wind event was recorded on September 11, 2017 when prolonged winds gusting up to 50 mph associated with Tropical Storm Irma moved through the County, causing downed trees and power lines and multi-day power outages.

The probability of one or more tornadoes touching down in Oconee County in any given year is 14.5% and the probability for one or more high wind events is 18%. The County's Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan notes that, although this is a relatively low level vulnerability to these events, the data shows that tornadoes and high wind events have the potential to do significant damage in the County.

4. Flooding

Floods are broadly classified as either general floods that are usually long-term events or flash floods caused by locally heavy rains in areas where water runs off quickly, moving at very high speeds. While flooding can occur almost anywhere given atmospheric conditions or lack of proper maintenance to flood control and drainage systems, flooding typically occurs in floodplains. Floodplains are areas that consist of a stream or river (floodway) and the adjacent areas that have been or can be covered by water (floodway fringe). Floodplains perform a critical function by temporarily storing and carrying floodwaters, reducing potential flood peaks, recharging groundwater supplies, and providing plant and animal habitats. Development within

a floodplain expands the floodplain boundary and increases the volume of runoff, making more areas and properties susceptible to flooding. Local development review processes should ensure that new construction and activity will not increase flooding on adjacent and nearby properties.

Congress created the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) with passage of the *National Flood Insurance Act* in 1968. The Act called for identification and publication of all floodplain areas that have special flood hazards and the establishment of flood-risk zones in all such areas. Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) are prepared and updated by FEMA to delineate the boundaries of each community's special flood hazard areas using available data or other approximation methods. FIRMs denote the portion of the floodplain that is subject to inundation by the base flood and flood-related erosion hazards. The maps are intended to assist communities in managing floodplain development and to assist insurance agencies and property owners in identifying areas where the purchase of flood insurance is advisable.

The goal of the NFIP is to reduce the impact of flooding on private and public structures by providing affordable insurance for property owners. Recognizing that local planning is a crucial tool for minimizing future flood damage, the program encourages communities to adopt and enforce floodplain management regulations to mitigate the effects of flooding on new and improved structures. The ability to determine and supervise the use of land within their jurisdictions makes local governments the frontline agent of comprehensive floodplain management. The primary requirement for community participation in the NFIP is the adoption and enforcement of floodplain management regulations that meet the minimum NFIP regulatory standards. The impetus for obtaining financial and technical assistance from the state and federal levels also originates with the local community. Managing development can reduce losses by avoiding encroachment into flood-prone areas, protecting floodplain resources, and building with flood-resistant measures.

Floodplain management minimizes the potential for flood damages to new construction and avoids aggravating existing flood hazard conditions that could increase potential flood damage to existing structures. NFIP regulations require that the lowest floor of all new construction and substantial improvements of existing residential structures be elevated to or above the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) to protect structures in flood-prone areas. Figure 6-1 illustrates the various aspects of a 100-year floodplain.

Oconee County is bordered on all but its northernmost border by rivers and lakes. While these water bodies and their tributaries are the primary drainage outlets for water flowing into and through the County, they can overflow when inundated by heavy rains, causing flooding in low lying areas. Based on data provided in the *Anderson and Oconee County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan*, Oconee County has a low level of vulnerability to notable flooding events, with an 18% probability of such an event in any year. However, the Plan notes that the southeastern area of the County has a high potential for flash flooding.

The Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan lists 13 notable flood events that caused \$50,000 or more in combined property and crop damages in Oconee County from 1960 through 2015. These events caused nearly \$7.89 million in property damage and \$452,522 in crop damage. The most recent notable flood event was recorded in September 2004, when widespread flooding of creeks and streams resulted in more than \$1.6 million in property damage. The only flood event listed in the *NOAA Storm Events Database* since 2015 occurred in 2018 in the northern area of the County, resulting in \$300,000 in property damage.

Flood hazard areas identified on FIRMs are denoted as *Special Flood Hazard Areas* (SFHA). The SFHA is an area that will be inundated by flood events having a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year – also known as the base flood or 100-year flood. Considered as high risk areas for flooding, SFHAs are denoted on Oconee County FIRMs as Zone A and Zone AE. These areas are found along the shores of Lakes Hartwell, Keowee, and Jocassee; along the Chattooga, Chauga, and Tugaloo Rivers; and along other creeks and tributaries.

Moderate risk flood hazard areas are those between the limits of the base flood and the 0.2% annual chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year – also known as a 500-year flood. The only area with this designation on the FIRM is found along a Coneross Creek tributary that generally flows from just south of North 1st Street to Cross Creek Drive in Seneca. This hazard area totals less than 13 acres. All other areas outside of the SFHA and higher than the elevation of the 0.2% annual chance of flood are considered to have minimal chance of flood hazard and are denoted on the Oconee County FIRMs as Zone X.

Regulatory floodways are also delineated on FIRMs. A floodway consists of a channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation over a designated height. Communities are required to regulate development in these floodways to ensure that there are no increases in upstream flood elevations. As with the 500-year flood zone, the only area in the County with this FIRM designation is located along the Coneross Creek tributary in Seneca and totals less than 25.38 acres.

Oconee County is a participant in the Federal Flood Insurance Program and adopted a *Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance* in 2009. The Ordinance applies to all areas of special flood hazard as identified by the FEMA maps for Oconee County. The Oconee County Floodplains Manager is responsible for implementing the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance in the unincorporated area of the County. No structure may be located, extended, converted, structurally altered, or developed in the County without full compliance with the regulations. The Cities of Seneca, Walhalla, and Westminster have all adopted flood ordinances and administer and enforce those regulations.

Specific flood zone determinations must be made by the Oconee County Floodplains Manager in consultation with FEMA map data. The Manager reviews all development permits to determine if a proposed development is located within a Special Flood Hazard Area. A floodplain



development permit is required for all developments identified as within, or including, a SFHA. Such development is required to meet all elevation and flood proofing requirements. For new construction, the lowest floor must be elevated at least three feet above the base flood elevation, with no basements permitted. Non-residential construction in SFHA Zone A may be flood proofed in lieu of elevation provided specific requirements are met, as certified by a professional engineer or architect. Variances may be considered for the wet-proofing of agricultural structures. No fill, new construction, substantial improvements or additions, manufactured homes outside of existing manufactured home parks or subdivisions, or other developments are allowed within designated floodways.

5. Drought and Heat Wave

Drought is caused by a lack of precipitation over an extended period of time, often resulting in water shortages. Unlike other environmental hazards, droughts develop slowly over a period of weeks, months, or years. Periodic droughts are documented throughout South Carolina's climate history, with every decade since 1900 including three or more years of below normal rainfall (*SCDNR, 2016*). Recent droughts have impacted agriculture, forestry, tourism, power generation, public water supplies, fisheries, and ecosystems. Drought conditions can also impact water and air quality and contribute to public health and safety risks (*S.C. Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2018*).

There were eight notable drought or heat wave events (with \$50,000 or more in damage) recorded in Oconee County from 1960 through 2015, causing a collective \$9.65 million in property damage and \$16.6 million in crop damage. The 1993 drought and associated heat wave hit at the height of the growing season in May and June, costing \$22.5 million in crop damage statewide and \$11 million in Oconee County. Property damage associated with the 1993 drought reached \$9.4 million.

In 2015, all South Carolina counties were in an incipient or moderate drought. By 2016, lack of rainfall caused the State's westernmost counties including Anderson, Pickens, and Oconee to be declared in severe drought status – just one step below the highest designation of extreme drought. Lake Hartwell was down to eight feet below normal level, Lake Jocassee was down 10 feet, and Lake Keowee was down four feet (*Greenville News, 2016*). The drought status of the three counties was finally downgraded to normal in June 2017 (*SCETV, 2017*). The extended period of abnormally dry weather brought rain deficits of 15 to 20 inches that significantly impacted agricultural production and prompted voluntary water restrictions in most communities (*NOAA Storm Events Database, 2019*). As of February 2019, all counties in the State were back to normal drought-free status (*S.C. State Climatology Office, 2019*). Despite this recent experience with a lengthy and costly drought, the County's Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan reports a relatively low 14% probability that the region will suffer a notable drought within a one-year time frame.



F. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The goals, objectives and strategies for implementation (GOIS) table summarizes the actions that will be undertaken in the coming decade to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the Natural Resources Element.

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Goal 6.1. Protect and improve air quality in Oconee County.		
Objective 6.1.1. Continue to support local, regional, and state plans and initiatives related to air quality.		
Strategy 6.1.1.1. Continue coordination and partnership in the S.C. Early Action Ozone Reduction Compact with other jurisdictions in the Appalachian COG Region, adopting and maintaining ozone-reducing reduction strategies as necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Appalachian COG (ACOG) • ACOG Counties • SCDHEC and EPA 	2030
Goal 6.2. Preserve, protect, and enhance Oconee County's land resources.		
Objective 6.2.1. Promote partnerships and voluntary conservation easements to preserve significant lands, habitats, and scenic areas under development pressure.		
Strategy 6.2.1.1. Support existing land conservation organizations in their efforts to preserve and protect rural lands, sensitive areas, and significant natural resources and transfer of development rights and conservation easements to protect rural lands, sensitive areas, and significant natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Soil and Water Conservation District • Land Trusts and Conservation Organizations 	2030
Strategy 6.2.1.2. Provide appropriate assistance from County departments and agencies in efforts to identify and preserve significant lands, and scenic areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021
Strategy 6.2.1.3. Support efforts of public and private organizations to protect critical habitats in Oconee County through conservation easements and other measures as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Property/Business Owners • Conservation Organizations • SCDNR • Keowee-Toxaway Habitat Enhancement Program 	2025
Objective 6.2.3. Manage natural assets to ensure natural resources enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors and increase economic opportunities.		
Strategy 6.2.3.1. Protect and preserve natural resources for recreational use and develop new opportunities for recreational access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SCDNR • SCPRT • USFS 	Annually



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<p><u>Strategy 6.2.3.2.</u> Work with public conservation partners to identify additional significant natural resources including viewsheds and habitats that warrant protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Conservation Organizations • SCDNR • SCPRT • USFS 	<p>2021</p>
<p><u>Strategy 6.2.3.3.</u> Promote parks and recreation facilities, both public and private, as part of a comprehensive countywide recreation system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SCDNR • SCPRT • USFS 	<p>2023</p>
<p><u>Strategy 6.2.3.4.</u> Expand and maintain public parks and recreation spaces to a uniform standard of excellence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SCDNR • SCPRT • USFS 	<p>Annually</p>
<p>Objective 6.2.4. Continue to promote reasonable access to Oconee County’s public natural amenities for residents and visitors.</p>		
<p><u>Strategy 6.2.4.1.</u> Encourage compatible land use adjacent to National and State Forests, wildlife management area, and County, State and municipal parks to protect such lands from incompatible uses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 6.2.4.2.</u> Review existing regulations and policies to identify barriers and additional opportunities to protecting current natural areas and open space.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	<p>2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 6.2.4.3.</u> Encourage and support efforts by public and private organizations to provide public access when conserving open space, natural areas and scenic vistas in Oconee County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Property Owners • Conservation Organizations 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 6.2.4.4.</u> Work with community partners to promote programs for residents of all ages to discourage littering and encourage participation in litter pickup programs and initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Keep Oconee Beautiful Assn. • School District of Oconee County • Local Civic Groups 	<p>2023</p>



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Goal 6.3. Preserve, protect, and enhance the quality and quantity of the water resources of Oconee County.		
Objective 6.3.1. Expand sewer service to additional areas as feasible.		
Strategy 6.3.1.1. Support wastewater treatment providers in the extension of sewer service to currently unserved or underserved areas to minimize the need for septic tanks where conditions are not suitable or water sources may be compromised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority (OJRSA) • Municipal Providers • Other Public and Private Providers 	2025
Strategy 6.3.1.2. Support wastewater treatment providers in the upgrade and expansion of existing treatment facilities to accommodate the expansion of sewer service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • OJRSA • Municipal Providers • Other Public and Private Providers 	2023
Objective 6.3.2. Monitor, maintain and improve water quality and quantity to meet the needs of County residents, employers, and institutions.		
Strategy 6.3.2.1. Partner with adjacent jurisdictions on comprehensive water studies detailing availability of all water sources, usage, and outflow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Adjacent Jurisdictions • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	2025
Strategy 6.3.2.2. Explore local and regional strategies to minimize non-point source pollution and institute Best Management Practices for the protection of water resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Utility Providers • SCDHEC • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	Annually
Strategy 6.3.2.3. Support and coordinate with SCDHEC to mitigate identified water quality impairments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Utility Providers • NPDES Permitted Dischargers • SCDHEC • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	2021



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<p><u>Strategy 6.3.2.4.</u> Utilize incentives, technical assistance, and regulations to promote sustainable environmental best practices by individuals, businesses, and developers to maintain and improve water quality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Property Owners and Developers • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	<p>2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 6.3.2.5.</u> Study the potential water quality impact of higher-density residential development near the lakes and explore options for mitigating any negative impacts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Developers • SCDHEC • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) • Duke Energy 	<p>2025</p>
<p>Objective 6.3.3. Encourage development practices that protect and preserve water resources.</p>		
<p><u>Strategy 6.3.3.1.</u> Establish strategies and adopt measures necessary to create a framework for the efficient implementation of erosion and sediment control regulations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	<p>2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 6.3.3.2.</u> Develop a County stormwater management program to prepare for efficient and cost-effective implementation in the event of Federal designation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	<p>2025</p>
<p>Objective 6.3.4. Manage water quantity and quality to ensure efficient utilization and appropriate conservation of the County’s water resources.</p>		
<p><u>Strategy 6.3.4.1.</u> Participate in and support regional efforts to protect watersheds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SCDHEC • Public and Non-profit Organizations • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 6.3.4.2.</u> Explore partnerships to develop a master plan for preserving the watershed areas surrounding our lakes including Keowee, Jocassee, and Hartwell.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • USACOE • SCDHEC 	<p>2021</p>
<p><u>Strategy 6.3.4.3.</u> Identify and explore ways to protect the water quality of lesser known waterways and “hidden gems” such as the Little River in Salem.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	<p>2022</p>
<p><u>Strategy 6.3.4.4.</u> Explore and promote best practices to protect waterways in agricultural and developing areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	<p>2021</p>



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<u>Strategy 6.3.4.5.</u> Support regulatory authorities in their efforts to preserve water quality and habitat through shoreline management policies and regulation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Duke Energy • USCOE • USFS 	2030
<u>Strategy 6.3.4.6.</u> Work with community partners to provide educational materials on best practices for septic tank maintenance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SCDHEC • Public and Non-profit organizations 	2025
<u>Strategy 6.3.4.7.</u> Explore options for establishing and protecting riparian buffers and identify waterbodies in need of such protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Oconee County Soil & Water Conservation District 	2023
Objective 6.3.5. Minimize flooding risk to County residents and business owners through the protection of floodplains and floodways.		
<u>Strategy 6.3.5.1.</u> Periodically review floodplain regulations and procedures to ensure protection per FEMA requirements and to evaluate conditions that may require more stringent standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually
<u>Strategy 6.3.5.2.</u> Review and update the Oconee County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance as needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually
Goal 6.4. Enhance and promote access to natural resources and associated recreational activities for residents and visitors.		
Objective 6.4.1. Encourage coordination among County and municipal recreation and natural resource managers.		
<u>Strategy 6.4.1.1.</u> Explore opportunities for coordination and cooperation in Oconee County to include planning for and implementing public and private recreation and natural resource programs and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SCDNR • SCPRT • Duke Energy • USFS • USCOE 	2030



Chapter 7. Community Facilities Element

The most basic and essential services are provided through community facilities. Collectively known as the community infrastructure, these facilities include the buildings, facilities, lands and services that support the public health, safety and welfare of Oconee County residents. These assets help shape daily living and work environments, provide the physical framework for the attraction of new businesses and employment opportunities, and provide a foundation for new growth and development. While many community facilities are provided or administered by the local government, others are offered by utilities, hospitals, school systems, and nonprofits.

The Community Facilities Element provides an inventory and assessment of the facilities and services available in Oconee County and its municipalities. The Element profiles community functions including: local government, water and sewer service, utilities, solid waste collection, fire and emergency medical services, police, education, health care, recreation, and libraries.

A. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Governmental facilities house activities, persons, and records used in government operations - whether local, county, state or federal. The need for new or expanded public facilities is directly related to the growth of a community, since the addition of more people, more homes, and additional businesses and industries prompt the need for new and expanded governmental services. In some cases, increased services can be accommodated using existing space. However, in many cases, a substantial increase in the level and scope of services requires additional operational space or access points.

1. Oconee County

Oconee County was created in 1868 from the western half of Pickens Township. It is the only county in the State that borders on two other states – Georgia and North Carolina. The County is governed under a council-administrator form of government, with a five-member council elected by district. The County Administrator is appointed by the Oconee County Council. Management of the County is carried out through a number of departments, each headed by elected or appointed officials. Oconee County employs 497 full-time staff and 24 part-time employees.

Oconee County owns and maintains public properties throughout the County. The locations of major facilities owned by Oconee County are listed in Table 7-1.



Table 7-1. Major Oconee County Facilities*

Facility	Location
Agriculture/Clemson Extension	W. South Broad Street, Walhalla
Airport Buildings	Airport Road, Seneca
Animal Control Facility	Sandifer Boulevard, Seneca
Brown's Square Building	Brown's Square Drive, Walhalla
Chau Ram Park Buildings	Chau Ram Park Road, Westminster
Cheohee Valley Emergency Substation	Cherokee Lake Road, Tamassee
Coroner's Office and Morgue	Memorial Drive, Seneca
County Administration Offices	Pine Street, Walhalla
DSS, VA and Facilities Maintenance	Kenneth Street, Walhalla
Foxwood Hills Emergency Substation	Blackjack Road, Westminster
High Falls Park Buildings	High Falls Road, Seneca
Holly Springs Emergency Substation	Long Creek Highway, Westminster
Cliffs Emergency Substation	Cliffs South Parkway, Salem
Lakeview Rest Home	Camp Road, Walhalla
Law Enforcement Center/Sheriff's Offices/ Emergency Services Facility Expansion	S. Church Street, Walhalla
New Courthouse Building	W. Main Street, Walhalla
New Detention Center	S. Church Street, Walhalla
Oakway Community Center	School House Road, Westminster
Old Courthouse Building	West Main Street, Walhalla
Probation and Parole Offices	Booker Drive, Walhalla
Roads and Bridges Department Facility	Wells Highway, Seneca
Rock Building	Short Street, Walhalla
Rock Quarry Buildings	Rock Crusher Road, Walhalla
Rosa Park Clinic	S. Oak Street, Seneca
Seneca Health Department	N. Townville Street, Seneca
Seneca Library	E. South 2 nd Street, Seneca
Shiloh Road Emergency Substation	Shiloh Road, Seneca
Solid Waste Complex	Wells Highway, Seneca
South Cove Park Buildings	South Cove Road, Seneca
Vehicle Maintenance Facility	Wells Highway, Seneca
Walhalla Library	W. South Broad Street, Walhalla
Walhalla Magistrate's Building	Booker Drive, Walhalla
Westminster Emergency/Fire Services Building	Emergency Lane, Westminster
Westminster Library	W. North Avenue, Westminster
Whetstone Emergency Substation	Whetstone Rd., Mountain Rest
Workforce Center Building	Keowee School Road, Seneca

* Additional facilities are discussed throughout the Element

2. Oconee County Municipalities



There are five municipalities in Oconee County, including the cities of Seneca, Walhalla, and Westminster, and the Towns of Salem and West Union. The *City of Walhalla* is second largest municipality in terms of size and population and is the county seat of Oconee County. The City operates under the council/administrator form of government in which the City Council acts as the governing body, while the City Administrator is responsible for the day-to-day municipal operations. The Council is comprised of six members and the Mayor, all elected at-large.

The *City of Seneca* is Oconee County's largest municipality in both size and population. The City operates under the mayor/council form of government in which the Mayor has administrative powers, but the legislative function rests with the Council as a body. The City Council is comprised of eight members and the Mayor, all elected at-large.

The *City of Westminster* is the County's third largest City, only slightly smaller than Walhalla in area but with 1,780 fewer residents than the County seat. The City is governed by a council/administrator form of government, with the Mayor and six council members elected at-large.

The *Town of West Union* is the County's smallest municipality at less than one square mile in size, but is larger in population than the Town of Salem. The Town is governed by a mayor/council form of government, with the Mayor and three council members elected at-large.

The *Town of Salem* is the smallest in terms of population, but slightly larger in land area than West Union, although still less than one square mile in size. Salem is governed by a council/administrator form of government, with the Mayor and three council members elected at-large.

3. County Boards and Commissions

All jurisdictions in South Carolina that regulate land use, including Oconee County, must have a planning commission and a board of zoning appeals. Members of both bodies are appointed by the governing body (county, city, or town council) of the jurisdiction covered.

The duty of the planning commission is to develop and carry out a continuing planning program for the physical, social, and economic growth, development and redevelopment of the community. The planning commission directs the development and update of the comprehensive plan and advises the governing body on the adoption of the plan. It also directs the preparation and update of land use regulations, including the zoning ordinance and land development regulations, and provides recommendations on the adoption of such regulations to the governing body. The *Oconee County Planning Commission* is comprised of seven members appointed by County Council.

The role of the *Oconee County Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA)* is quasi-judicial and includes considering appeals to determinations made by the Zoning Administrator and special exceptions.



The Board also conducts hearings and rulings on variance applications from the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. The Oconee County BZA includes seven members who are appointed by County Council.

B. UTILITIES

Like all communities, the vitality, growth and development pattern of Oconee County depends on a reliable and accessible network of public and private utilities and infrastructure. Utilities include the provision of water, wastewater disposal, solid waste disposal, and electricity. Not only are these services essential for individuals, they are also vital to businesses and service providers and impact the long-term growth and development potential of the County and its municipalities. The availability of water and sewer is a factor in the suitability of an area for future development. Ready access effects the location and affordability of residential development and is a key factor weighed by business and industry in site selection.

1. Water Service, Treatment and Distribution

Access to water service plays an important role in the development pattern of a community. Residential development outside of water service areas must utilize wells, adding to the initial cost of each residential unit. Many businesses and industries require the reliability and access to water that only a public utility can provide. Water service is provided to Oconee County residents by 22 community water systems, including seven public water systems and 15 private systems (Table 7-2 and Map 7-1). Community water systems serve the same population year-round. More individualized systems serve only for a portion of the year (such as a school) or serve transient populations (rest stops, campgrounds, gas stations, etc.).

Water treatment is primarily provided by three plants, with another coming online in the summer of 2019. The *City of Seneca Water Treatment Plant* has a capacity of 20 million gallons per day (MGD), with an average daily demand of 6.5 MGD and current peak demand at 11 MGD. The Plant obtains its water from Lake Keowee. The *City of Walhalla Coneross Creek Water Treatment Plant* has a capacity of 3 MGD, an average daily demand of 1.9 MGD, and peak demand of 2.3 MGD. Water treated at the Plant is drawn from Coneross Creek. The City broke ground on a new water treatment facility in January 2019 that will have a capacity of 4 MGD. It will draw water from the Cane Creek branch of Lake Keowee, with completion anticipated in fall 2020. The *City of Westminster Water Treatment Plant* has a capacity of 4 MGD, with an approximate average daily demand of 2 MGD. The Plant draws water from the Chauga River. Pioneer Rural Water District's new *Robert J. Stevenson Water Treatment Plant* was completed in May 2019, with commencement of operations anticipated soon thereafter. The Plant draws water from Lake Hartwell, with an initial capacity of 2.5 MGD that is upgradeable to 5 MGD. Water treatment at a smaller scale is also provided by several individual systems.

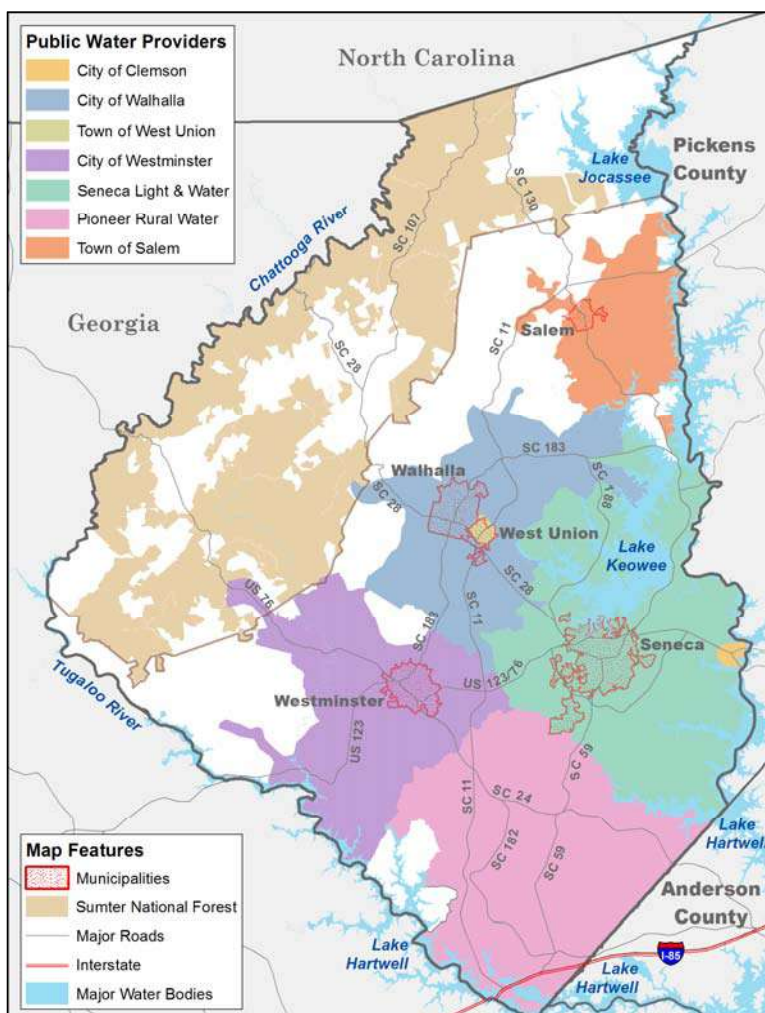
Table 7-2. Community Water Systems in Oconee County, 2019

Water System Name	Population Served	Primary Water Source Type
Public Water Systems (<i>general area served</i>)		
Seneca Light and Water (<i>Greater Seneca</i>)	33,374	Surface water – Lake Keowee
Pioneer Rural Water District (<i>Greater Westminster</i>)	16,236	Surface water - purchased
City of Walhalla (<i>Greater Walhalla</i>)	15,740	Surface water – Coneross Creek
City of Westminster (<i>Greater Westminster</i>)	7,582	Surface water – Chauga River
Town of Salem (<i>Greater Salem</i>)	2,278	Surface water - purchased
Town of West Union (<i>West Union</i>)	468	Surface water - purchased
City of Clemson (<i>Small area along U.S. Hwy. 123/76</i>)	17,953	Surface water - purchased
Private Water Systems (<i>location</i>)		
Keowee Key Utility System (<i>Salem</i>)	3,602	Surface water - purchased
TESI-Foxwood Hills (<i>Westminster</i>)	1,226	Surface water - purchased
The View at the Pier (<i>Seneca</i>)	864	Surface water - purchased
Port Bass I (<i>Westminster</i>)	590	Ground water
Harts Cove and Tory Pointe (<i>Seneca</i>)	560	Surface water - purchased
Chickasaw Point (<i>Westminster</i>)	490	Surface water - purchased
Timber Lake I (<i>Westminster</i>)	202	Ground water
Port Bass II (<i>Westminster</i>)	178	Ground water
Keowee Bay Subdivision (<i>Salem</i>)	115	Ground water
Timber Lake II (<i>Westminster</i>)	96	Ground water
Bay Ridge Subdivision (<i>Salem</i>)	62	Ground water
Isaqueena Point Utility System (<i>Salem</i>)	36	Surface water - purchased
Camp Ghigau (<i>Tamassee</i>)	35	Ground water
Turtlehead Subdivision (<i>Salem</i>)	32	Ground water
Cherokee Boys School (<i>Westminster</i>)	26	Ground water

Source: U.S. EPA, Envirofacts, Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS), 2019



Map 7-1. Public Water Systems



Source: Oconee County GIS Department, 2019

2. Wastewater

The availability of sewer service is critical to supporting higher density residential development, educational and health care facilities, and the location or expansion of business and industry. Residential development outside of sewer service areas must rely on septic systems. State law requires that a parcel of land proposed for a septic system be capable of supporting proper operation of the individual system. Suitability criteria are based on factors including soil type, parcel size, and slope. For most businesses and industries, the availability of sewer service is requisite for new facility location.

Public wastewater treatment in Oconee County is provided by the Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority's (OJRSA) *Coneross Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant* (WWTP). The treatment



one-half mile of gravity sewer lines. Wastewater management is also provided by a number of private providers for residential developments in Oconee County.

3. Energy Sources

Electricity is the primary source of energy for Oconee County residents, followed by natural gas (Table 7-3). Two in three (66.9%) County homes are heated with electricity and 17.7% are heated with natural gas. More than nine percent of homes are heated with bottled, tank or LP gas and 4.1% use wood for heating.

Table 7-3. Heating Fuels for Occupied Housing Units, 2017

Heating Fuels	Oconee County		South Carolina	
	#	%	#	%
All Occupied Housing Units	31,354	100.0%	1,871,307	100.0%
Utility (natural) gas	5,550	17.7%	416,320	22.2%
Bottled, tank, or LP gas	2,901	9.3%	74,302	4.0%
Electricity	20,962	66.9%	1,333,368	71.3%
Fuel oil, kerosene, etc.	397	1.3%	17,554	0.9%
Coal or coke	0	0.0%	293	0.0%
Wood	1,283	4.1%	18,243	1.0%
Other fuel	65	0.2%	2,789	0.1%
No fuel used	196	0.6%	8,438	0.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

a. Electrical Transmission and Distribution

Electrical power is provided to residents and businesses in Oconee County by four providers (Map 7-3). The **Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative** has the largest service area, including most of the unincorporated area in western and southern Oconee County. The Cooperative's service area encompasses more than 1,800 square miles that also include areas in Anderson, Greenville, Spartanburg, and Pickens counties. Blue Ridge provides service to 64,890 members and is South Carolina's fourth largest electric cooperative (*Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative, 2019*).

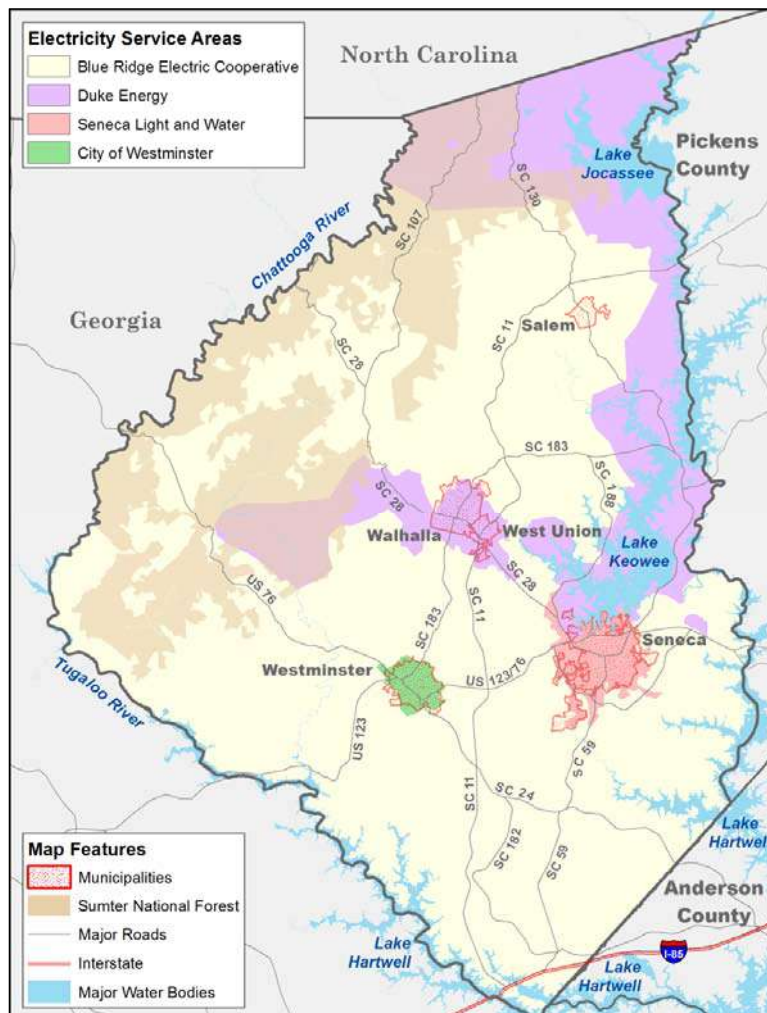
Duke Energy provides electric service to a substantial area of Oconee County that includes the greater Walhalla and West Union area that stretches north from Seneca along Lake Keowee to Lake Jocassee and includes the northernmost area of the County. Duke Energy is one of the largest electric power companies in the United States, serving electricity to 7.6 million electric retail customers in six states. More than 756,000 of these customers are in South Carolina (*Duke Energy, 2019*). Duke Energy plants that provide electricity to customers in Oconee County and neighboring areas include the Oconee Nuclear Station, the Keowee Hydro Station, and the Jocassee and Bad Creek Pumped-storage Generating Stations. Of particular note is the Oconee Nuclear Station, one of the nation's largest nuclear plants with a generating capacity of 2.6 million kilowatts – enough to power 1.9 million homes.



Seneca Light and Water provides electricity to 6,900 customer meters within the City of Seneca and adjoining areas (*Seneca Light and Water, 2019*). The City purchases wholesale electricity from Santee Cooper.

The *City of Westminster* provides electricity to 1,501 customers within the City of Westminster and some adjoining areas. The City annually distributes approximately 30 megawatts of energy obtained through Piedmont Municipal Power Agency, a joint action agency that includes nine other cities that collectively own 25% of the output of Unit 2 at the Catawba Nuclear Station in York County, South Carolina.

Map 7-3. Electric Service Providers*



* Map is a general representation, specific locations should be verified with providers
 Source: Oconee County GIS Department, 2019



b. Natural Gas

Fort Hill Natural Gas Authority is the sole provider of natural gas in Oconee County. The Authority was established by the South Carolina Legislature in 1952 to serve the municipalities and outlying areas of Oconee and Pickens Counties and portions of Anderson County (*Fort Hill Natural Gas Authority, 2019*). Fort Hill is one of four non-profit, tax-exempt natural gas authorities in the State. The Authority purchases natural gas on the open market for resale to its approximately 40,000 residential, commercial, and industrial customers. Purchased gas is transported to Fort Hill from various sources via interconnects with Williams Gas Pipeline in Anderson County.

4. Internet

High-speed internet service is available within Oconee County from a number of providers including AT&T, Charter Spectrum, Northland Communications, Onetone Telecom, Viasat Internet, and HughesNet. In addition, mobile wireless services are available in the Oconee area from a wide range of carriers including AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, and Verizon. A number of local businesses and public facilities also have wireless internet (Wi-Fi) connection capabilities for their customers and employees, including the Oconee County Library and local businesses, restaurants, and motels.

On August 18, 2010, Oconee County received \$9.6M in Federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding to construct a 250-mile broadband fiber optic network under the project name Fiber Optics Creating Unified Solutions (FOCUS). The first phase of the project set out to support the School District of Oconee County, emergency services, E-911 service, and local, state, and federal government locations. The second phase of the FOCUS project focused on connecting business and residential customers. However, in 2012 South Carolina legislative bill H3508 was enacted, requiring FOCUS to modify the original business model used to sell service to customers. FOCUS instead entered into a wholesale arrangement with local Internet Services Providers to provide services to customers. In the 3rd and final phase of the FOCUS project, Oconee County issued an RFP to lease the network out to an operator to maintain and grow the network. OneTone Telecom, Inc., was awarded the contract and continues to maintain the network. The company has expanded the network to 330 miles, adding thousands of customers.

5. Solid Waste

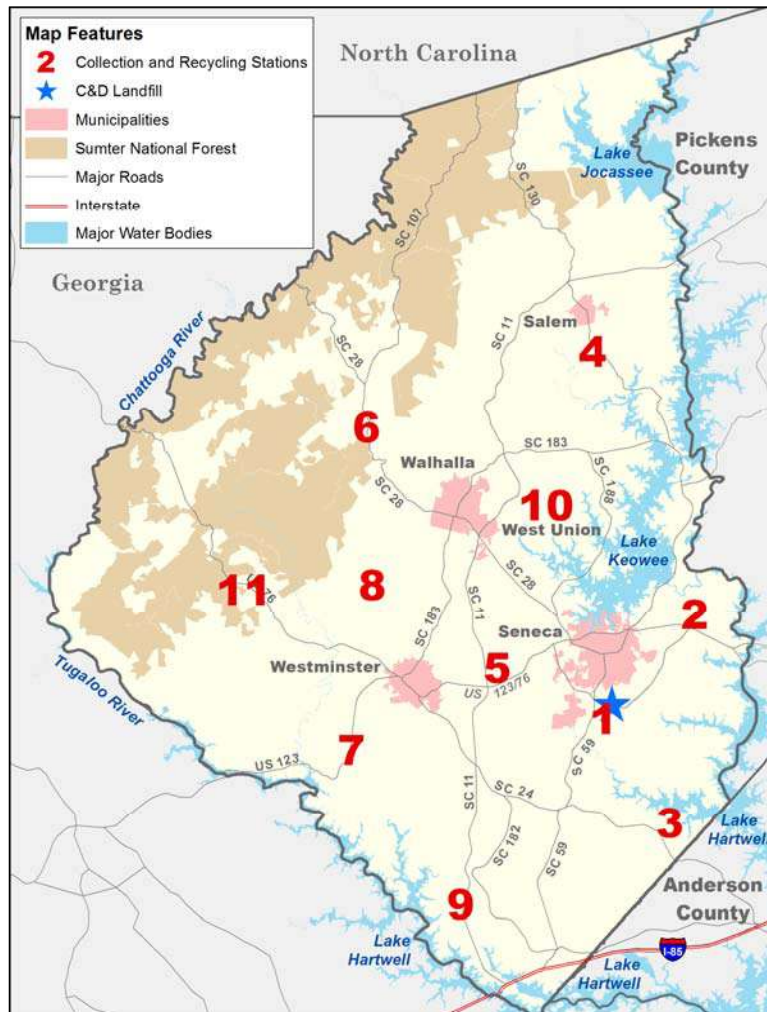
The Oconee County Solid Waste Complex on Wells Highway in Seneca houses the main office, a material recovery facility for recyclables, and a transfer station for loading shipments of municipal solid waste for landfill disposal. Because Oconee County does not operate an active landfill, all municipal solid waste is transported to the Waste Management landfill in Homer, Georgia. However, two closed landfills in the County are managed and monitored.



Oconee County also operates a Class 2 Construction and Demolition (C&D) landfill, mulching facility for storage and sale of ground yard waste, and a concrete, block and asphalt grinding operation located across from the Solid Waste Complex on Wells Highway.

While the County does not provide solid waste collection, it operates eleven manned collection and recycling centers located throughout the County (Map 7-4) and two unmanned centers in the cities of Westminster and Walhalla. The recycling centers are for household trash and recyclables only and do not accept commercial waste. Total managed waste in 2018 was 82,056 tons, including 43,591 tons of waste through the transfer station and 3,355 tons of recyclables (*Oconee County Budget Document, 2018-2019*). The Solid Waste Department has 35 full-time positions and one part-time position, including administration, equipment operators, a recycling coordinator/educator, and clerks.

Map 7-4. Solid Waste Collection and Recycling Stations and C&D Landfill



Source: Oconee County GIS Department, 2018



Because collection and recycling centers 2, 4, 5, and 6 are located in the major growth areas, Solid Waste Department staff anticipates the need for future expansion to help alleviate traffic, expedite drop-off, and better facilitate recycling and disposal services. The need to upgrade or expand the County's transfer station to accommodate an increased waste stream in recent years is also expected within the next three to five years.

C. EDUCATION

Education is a lifelong process that consists of two components. The first is a high quality foundation of basic education through the PK-12 system that is followed by an on-going individualized pathway of higher education and advanced career training opportunities. Communities that promote a philosophy of lifelong learning among residents are better positioned to successfully compete in a global economy. Access to advanced workforce training programs is an integral component of community and individual economic sustainability.

The Oconee Campus of Tri-County Technical College (TCTC) provides County residents with a greater level of access to workforce development programs, facilities, and advanced training and continuing education opportunities. In addition, a number of public and private postsecondary institutions are located within commuting distance for County residents, including Clemson University, Southern Wesleyan University, and Anderson University. The locations of PK-12 schools and the Tri-County Technical College campus are shown on Map 7-5 and profiled in the following sections, along with private schools.

1. School District of Oconee County

The Oconee County School District provides educational services to 10,495 students (*S.C. Dept. of Education, 2019*), with an annual budget that exceeds \$107 million (*School District of Oconee County, Fast Facts, 2019*). As the largest employer in the County, the District employs 1,591 administrators, teachers and support staff. South Carolina Department of Education headcount data for 2018-2019 indicate the District has the 22nd largest enrollment among the State's 83 districts. The District spent an annual average of \$11,069 per pupil in school year 2017-2018. The School District operates ten elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools (Table 7-4 and Map 7-5).



Table 7-4. Oconee County Public Schools and Enrollment, 2018

School	Enrollment
Elementary Schools	5,170
Blue Ridge Elementary School	621
Fair-Oak Elementary School	579
James M. Brown Elementary School	625
Keowee Elementary School	396
Northside Elementary School	656
Orchard Park Elementary School	408
Ravenel Elementary School	597
Tamassee-Salem Elementary School	247
Walhalla Elementary School	576
Westminster Elementary School	465
Middle Schools	2,375
Seneca Middle School	791
Walhalla Middle School	898
West-Oak Middle School	686
High Schools	2,950
Seneca Senior High School	1,006
Walhalla High School	1,063
West-Oak High School	881
District Total	10,495

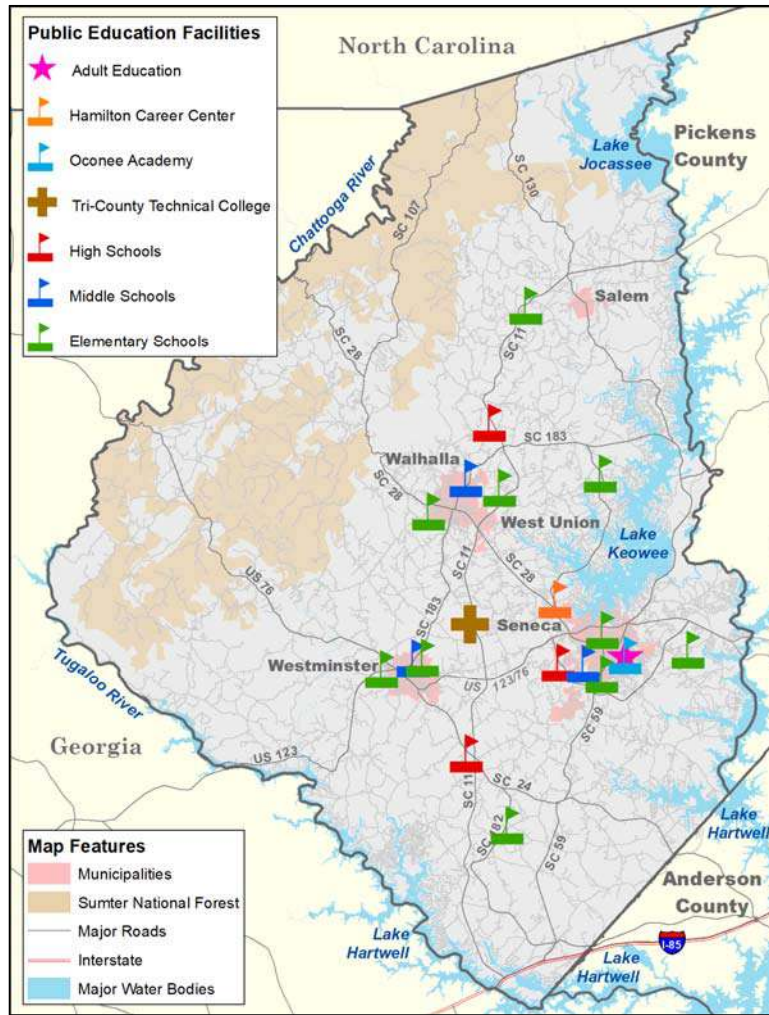
Source: S.C. Department of Education, School Report Cards, April 2019

In addition to these schools, the District's *Hamilton Career Center* offers more than 20 career and technology education programs that support over 1,000 students from the District's three high schools as they prepare for transition to institutions of higher education and careers. A new Career Center is planned for co-location in the Oconee County Industry and Technology Park with the new Tri-County Technical College Oconee Campus, with completion anticipated in 2020. Development of the Career Center is a cooperative effort between the School District, Oconee County, businesses, industries, and Tri-County Technical College and is intended to match the needs of the County's current and potential industries.

The District's *Oconee Academy* is an alternative program for middle and high school students who have been identified as interfering with the learning of other class members and refuse to follow the District's Discipline Code. Enrollment is decided by the administration of the student's home school and the Director of Student Services. Students normally attend the program for a minimum of one semester, with transportation and lunch provided. The District also offers *Adult Education* in the form of a diploma program, High School Equivalency (HSED) classes, literacy programs, and career readiness instruction and testing.



Map 7-5. Public Education Facilities



Source: Oconee County GIS Department, 2018

2. Private Schools

There are a number of private schools in Oconee County that range in size from 158 pupils at the Oconee Christian Academy to fewer than ten students at the Popular Springs Adventist School and New Haven Christian School (Table 7-6). These non-public enrollment numbers do not include the homeschooled students in the County.



Table 7-6. Private Schools in Oconee County*

School and Location	Grades	Enrollment
Oconee Christian Academy, <i>Seneca</i>	PK-12	158
Foothills Christian School, <i>Westminster</i>	1-12	84
Faith Christian School, <i>Walhalla</i>	PK-12	15
Cherokee Creek Boys School, <i>Westminster</i>	5-10	42
Fair Play Christian School, <i>Fair Play</i>	1-12	23
Poplar Springs Seventh-Day Adventist School, <i>Westminster</i>	1-6	7
New Haven Christian School, <i>Walhalla</i>	3-6	7

* Table may not include a complete listing of existing private schools

Sources: *Private School Review, April 2017*

3. Tri-County Technical College

Established in 1962, Tri-County Technical College (TCTC) has the fifth largest enrollment among the 16 two-year colleges that comprise the South Carolina Technical Education System. The College serves its three-county service area from its main campus in Pendleton and through four satellite campuses in Anderson (Anderson), Oconee (Westminster), and Pickens (Pendleton and Easley) Counties. The Oconee County campus opened as TCTC's newest campus in 2018. The campus includes a new \$5.5 million, 37,000 square foot building. It is co-located in the Oconee County Industry and Technology Park with the School District of Oconee County's new Career Center, which is slated to open in 2020. Program offerings at the campus support manufacturing in the region and also include university studies and transfer certificates, business administration, and a high school dual credit program with the School District.

The College enrolls more than 6,000 students annually in 70 associate degree, diploma, and certificate programs (*TCHC, 2019*). The average age of TCTC students is 22.1 years, with more than 55% of students attending full time. Oconee County residents comprise more than 14% of the total TCTC enrollment.

D. LIBRARIES

The Oconee County Public Library was established in 1948 in Walhalla, with subsequent branches opened in Westminster in 1950, Salem in 1952, and Seneca in 1953. New facilities were built for the Walhalla and Westminster branches in 1979 and an expansion of the Seneca branch was completed when the library joined the County system in 1983. The Salem branch began sharing space with the Salem Town Hall in 1981. The Library also provides bookmobile service to communities that are more than 1.5 miles from a public library facility. Table 7-7 lists the current Library locations and sizes.

The Walhalla Library serves as the headquarters and main branch and is the largest facility in the Oconee County Public Library system. The system employs 19 full-time and 12 part-time workers. The collection includes 147,047 books, 4,401 audio books, 207 print periodicals, and 11,218



DVDs. Also included are downloadable audio books, e-books, and magazines. Annual visits to all four branches totaled nearly 225,160 in 2018, with a total circulation of 317,126. Total collection use at the Oconee County Public Library ranked 14th highest and the number of cardholders ranked 18th highest among South Carolina's 42 public libraries in 2017.

The main library and its branch locations are an important resource for County residents who lack personal access to a computer and internet. The Library's 33 public computers were used by County residents more than 25,740 times in 2018, while many others used the Library's Wi-Fi access to the internet with their personal devices.

Table 7-7. Oconee County Public Library Locations

Library	Size	Location
Walhalla Headquarters	22,500 sq. ft.	501 W. South Broad St., Walhalla
Seneca Branch	9,000 sq. ft.	300 E. South 2 nd St., Seneca
Westminster Branch	5,300 sq. ft.	112 W. North Ave., Westminster
Salem Branch	1,025 sq. ft.	5B Park Ave., Salem

Source: Oconee County Public Library, April 2019

E. PUBLIC SAFETY

A safe and secure environment that projects a climate of health, vitality and community spirit among residents of all ages is integral to building a strong community. The personnel, facilities, equipment, and services dedicated to protecting the safety and property of the public are among the most essential community resources.

1. Oconee County Emergency Services

Oconee County Emergency Services is headquartered on Emergency Lane in Westminster and employs 35 full-time staff, including the fire chief; four deputy chiefs - Emergency Manager, Emergency Medical Director, Fire Marshal, and Special Teams Coordinator; training officer; shift supervisors; firefighters; radiological operations planner; administrative staff; a logistics technician; and seven part-time employees. A team of 620 dedicated volunteers provide day-to-day service delivery across Oconee County, supported by career personnel assigned to each station. The Emergency Services team is responsible for fire protection, medical first response, Hazardous Materials mitigation, technical rescue, SCUBA Dive Rescue, emergency management and public safety education.

a. Emergency Management

Although rare in occurrence, Oconee County is vulnerable to various natural and technological hazards. Advance planning and preparation for such emergencies is essential in preparing community leaders, response staff, and the general public to make rapid and informed decisions that will save lives and quickly restore infrastructure and services when manmade or natural



disaster strikes. The County's *Emergency Management* (EM) team provides planning, training, and event coordination between municipal, county, and state agencies for manmade and natural disaster events. A great deal of planning and training is committed to support Duke Energy's Oconee Nuclear Station emergency response plan. The EM staff continuously provides public information and support for special events and incidents as they occur including storms, ice and snow events, and public health concerns.

b. Special Teams

Specialized response services in Oconee County are provided through three teams: *Dive*, *Special Rescue*, and *Hazardous Materials (Hazmat)*. Each of these teams is comprised of volunteers with specialized training on equipment needed to effectively deal with situations that may occur. Examples of specialized skills used by these teams include high-angle rescue, wilderness search, confined search, dive rescue, and swift-water rescue. Demand for these services is increasing as the popularity of boating, climbing, hiking, and camping in the remote areas of the County continues to grow.

c. Fire Service

As one of the most fundamental and valuable services provided by local government, fire protection and prevention is of vital importance to every citizen and visitor in Oconee County. There are 18 fire districts in Oconee County, including 14 all-volunteer fire departments, four municipal departments, and the Keowee Fire Special Tax District (Map 7-6). All departments operate under a countywide automatic aid agreement to ensure proper responses to each incident, regardless of the location.

The *Oconee County Fire Division* is headquartered on Emergency Lane in Westminster and employs 35 full-time staff, including the fire chief, deputy fire chief, fire marshal, training officer, captains, firefighters, radiological operations planner, and administrative staff, and seven part-time employees (*Oconee County, SC Budget Document 2018-2019*). A dedicated team of 450 volunteers provide day to day service delivery across the County, supported by career personnel assigned to each station.

The fire station of the *City of Seneca Fire Department* is on West South Fourth Street in Seneca. The Department operates three shifts, with each shift consisting of a captain, lieutenant, and seven full-time firefighters (*City of Seneca Fire Department, 2019*). In addition to providing fire service within the City, Seneca has an agreement with Oconee County to provide fire service to the unincorporated area within a five-mile radius of the City. The Seneca Fire Department also provides emergency medical services within its service area, with ambulance transportation provided by the Oconee Medical Center.

The *City of Walhalla Fire Department* is located at East North Broad Street in Walhalla, and employs ten paid firefighters, including the fire chief, six full-time firefighters, and three part-

time firefighters, assisted by 37 volunteer firefighters (*City of Walhalla Fire Department, 2019*). The Fire Department also provides coverage within the City, for the Issaqueena Falls-Stumphouse Tunnel Park, and within a five-mile radius of the incorporated area based on a contract with Oconee County. The Fire Department also operates as an Emergency Medical Responder.

The *City of Westminster Fire Department* is co-located in the Oconee County Fire Station Headquarters on Emergency Lane in Westminster, where they lease two bays and office space from the County. Department staff includes the chief, fire marshal, three firefighters, and 27 volunteers (*City of Westminster Fire Department, 2019*).

The *Keowee Fire Department* provides service in the Keowee Fire Special Tax District. The District encompasses a 30-square mile area on and near Lake Keowee and includes the Oconee Nuclear Station and approximately 5,000 residences. The District is governed by five elected commissioners. The Keowee Fire Department is headquartered on Maintenance Road, with a substation on Doug Hollow Road. Department staff includes a full-time fire chief, four fire captains, 22 firefighters, seven volunteers, and six support staff (*Keowee Fire Department, 2019*).

The *Town of Salem Fire Department* is located on East Main Street in Salem. The Department employs one part-time driver who is available 12 hours a day, seven days a week, joined by 25 volunteers (*Oconee County Fire Division, 2019*).

Oconee County fire stations are listed in Table 7-8. Map 7-6 provides the location of fire stations in the County.

Table 7-8. Oconee County Fire Stations, 2019

Station #	Station Name
--	Oconee County Emergency Services Headquarters
1	Oakway
2	Salem
3	Corinth-Shiloh
4	Mountain Rest
5	Walhalla
7	Seneca
8	Fair Play
9	Long Creek
10	Cleveland
11	Keowee-Ebenezer
12	Friendship
13	Crossroads
14	Pickett Post Camp Oak
15	South Union
16	West Union
17	Keowee Key
19	Camp Road
20	Cliffs
23	Foxwood Hills
24	Holly Springs
25	Whetstone
26	Village Creek
27	Cheohee Valley
30	Shiloh Road

Source: Oconee County Fire Services Division, April 2019

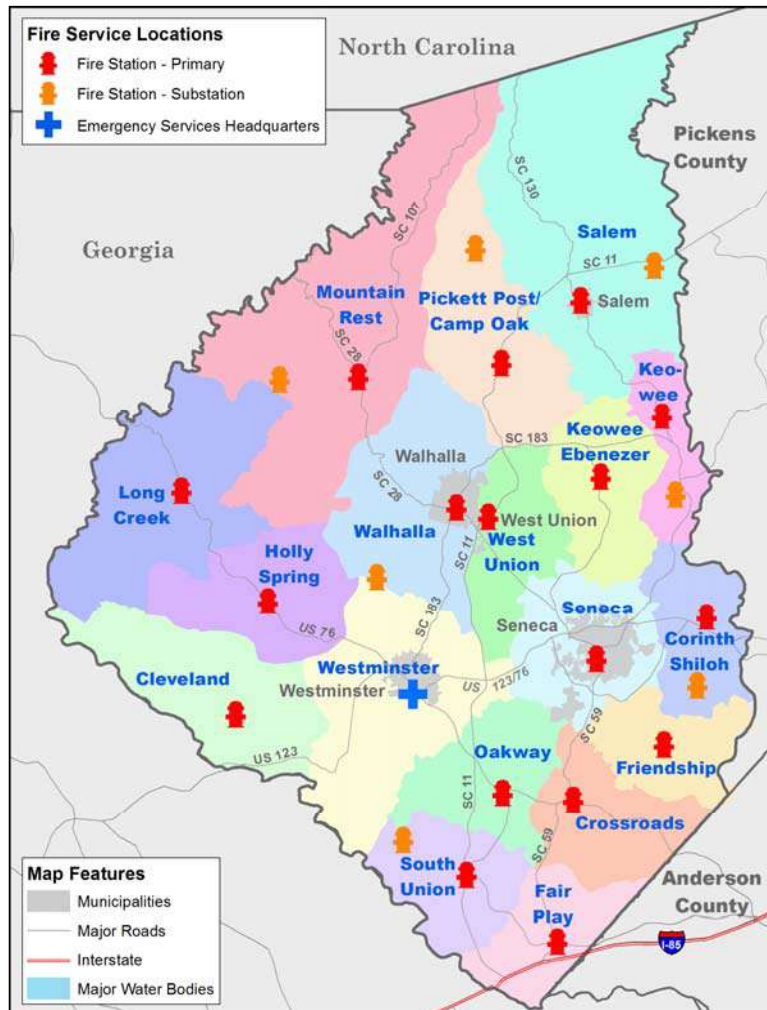
While the provision of adequate, state-of-the-art firefighting equipment and trained personnel is vital to the preservation of life and property, it also significantly impacts the cost of individual fire insurance premiums in a community. Insurance companies use a classification system provided by the Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO) to determine the level of fire protection for each home they insure. Classifications range from 1 to 10, with Class 1 representing the best public protection and Class 10 indicating no recognized protection. Factors that contribute to the classification assignment include the effectiveness of the fire department in receiving and dispatching fire alarms, the number of fire stations, the availability and amount of water needed to fight fires, training provided to local fire fighters, maintenance and testing of equipment, and the distribution of fire stations and service throughout the community. Areas served by municipal or other water services benefit from lower ISO ratings and ultimately, lower insurance ratings.

ISO ratings in Oconee County are 2 in Walhalla, Seneca, and Westminster; 3 in the Keowee Fire Special Tax District, 4 in Salem, and 4 in the unincorporated areas of the County. These ratings are for areas within five road miles of a fire station, which in Oconee County includes



approximately 97% of all homes and businesses (*Oconee County Fire Division, 2019*). ISO ratings for areas beyond five miles of a fire station are higher, with these areas in the unincorporated areas of the County rated 10.

Map 7-6. Fire Districts and Fire Station Locations



Source: Oconee County GIS Department, 2018

4. Law Enforcement

Efficient and effective law enforcement is essential to the quality of life in a community. Law enforcement in Oconee County is provided by the Oconee County Sheriff’s Department and the police departments of the cities of Seneca, Walhalla, and Westminster and the towns of Salem and West Union. The locations of the Sheriff’s Department headquarters and of municipal police departments are shown on Map 7-7.

A total of 2,331 index crimes were reported in Oconee County in 2017 – a 1.6% decrease from the 2,369 index crimes reported in 2016 (Table 7-9). There are seven index offenses: murder,



rape, robbery, aggravated assault, breaking and entering, motor vehicle theft, larceny, and arson. Index offenses are categorized either as violent crimes (murder, sexual battery, robbery and aggravated assault) or property crimes (breaking and entering, motor vehicle theft, larceny, and arson). Violent crimes account for 8.8% of all index crimes in the County – lower than the 2016 percentage of 9.5%. The most prevalent violent crime in the County was aggravated assault, accounting for 70% of violent crimes. Only four murders were reported in Oconee County in 2017. Nearly 70% of property crimes and 63.4% of all index crimes were categorized as larceny, which is the unlawful taking of property and includes offenses such as shoplifting, pocket-picking, purse snatching, and thefts from motor vehicles and of motor vehicle parts.

The index crime rate (rate per 10,000 residents) in Oconee County is lower than the statewide rates for similar crimes, with the exception of arson, which is slightly higher (Table 7-9). The overall index crime rate for violent crimes in the County is nearly half that of the State rate.

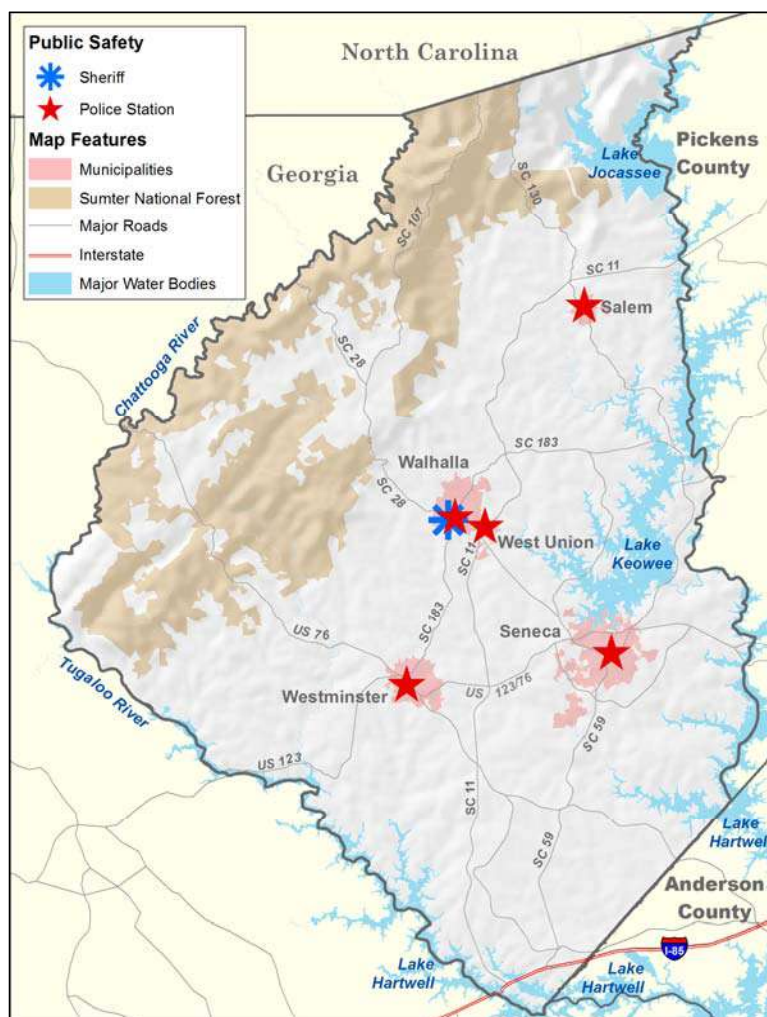
Table 7-9. Index Crimes Reported in Oconee County*, 2016 and 2017

Index Crime	2016			2017			2017 South Carolina Rate per 10,000 Population
	#	%	Rate per 10,000 Population	#	%	Rate per 10,000 Population	
Violent Crimes	224	9.5%	29.3	205	8.8%	26.5	50.4
Murder	1	0.4%	0.1	4	2.0%	0.5	0.7
Sexual Battery	51	22.8%	6.7	39	19.0%	5.0	5.2
Robbery	17	7.6%	2.2	18	8.8%	2.3	7.7
Aggravated Assault	155	69.2%	20.3	144	70.2%	18.6	36.7
Property Crimes	2,145	90.5%	280.9	2,126	91.2%	271.1	324.4
Breaking & Entering	477	22.3%	62.6	463	21.8%	59.9	62.5
Motor Vehicle Theft	124	5.8%	16.2	172	8.1%	22.3	29.2
Larceny	1,538	71.7%	201.4	1,479	69.6%	191.4	231.4
Arson	5	0.2%	0.7	12	0.6%	1.6	1.3
Index Total	2,369	100.0%	---	2,331	100.0%	---	---

* Includes crimes reported by all law enforcement agencies in the County
Sources: S.C. Law Enforcement Division, *Crime in SC Book, 2016 and 2017*



Map 7-7. Public Safety Locations



Source: Oconee County GIS Department, 2018

a. Oconee County Sheriff's Office

The Oconee County Sheriff's Office (OSCO) provides law enforcement for the unincorporated areas of the County and within the Town of Salem. The Sheriff's Office is headquartered in the Oconee County Law Enforcement Center on South Church Street in Walhalla. The OSCO also operates from four additional locations, the Seneca substation on Memorial Drive in Seneca, the Oakway substation on School House Road in Westminster, the Long Creek substation on Long Creek Highway in Westminster, and the Keowee/Salem substation on Maintenance Road in Salem. The Office has 196 employees in a variety of roles, organized within five divisions – detention (47 employees), special operations (36 employees), road patrol (44 employees), criminal investigations/community services (42 employees), and communications (22 employees). Each deputy is assigned a patrol vehicle. The OSCO is assisted by 13 reserve officers and chaplains. The Sheriff oversees a wide range of activities, including law enforcement patrol, criminal investigation, traffic enforcement, animal control, a K-9 unit, school resource officers,

civil process, court security, and management of the Detention Center. In addition, the OSCO answers calls for the City of Westminster and the towns of Salem and West Union when they do not have officers on duty. In FY 2017-2018, the Sheriff's Office served 3,375 warrants, answered 48,978 calls for service, and the Road Patrol made more than 1,000 arrests (*Oconee County Budget Document 2018-2019*).

b. Oconee County Emergency Communications/E911

The Emergency Communications/E-911 Division of the Sheriff's Office is located in the Law Enforcement Center on South Church Street in Walhalla. The Division provides emergency dispatch and radio services for the Sheriff's Office, local law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, Oconee County Rural Fire Control, and Oconee County Emergency Services. The Communications Center provides dispatching for all emergency services in the County except for the City of Seneca, which has its own E-911 dispatching center for services within its jurisdiction. Both the County and Seneca communications centers provide mutual backup as needed. Emergency Communications is the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for the County where all E-911 calls are answered and dispatched and also serves as the Disaster Warning Point for Oconee County. Staffing for the Division includes 22 employees in a number of positions including director, 18 dispatchers, database administrator, and office manager. Emergency Communications received 37,000 calls in FY 2018-2019 (*Oconee County Budget Document 2018-2019*).

c. Oconee County Detention Center

The Oconee County Detention Center is located on South Church Street in Walhalla. The Detention Center is the only such facility in Oconee County and houses arrestees for all County, municipal, and state agencies having jurisdictional authority in the County. Completed in 2015, the Detention Center provides 111 cells with 192 beds. The Center operates under the Oconee County Sheriff's Department, with 47 full-time employees, including 24 correctional officers. The Detention Center booked 3,700 inmates in FY 2019, with an average daily population of 178 (*Oconee County Budget Document 2018-2019*).

d. Municipal Police Departments

Headquartered on East North Depot Street in Seneca, the ***City of Seneca Police Department*** has a total staff of 47 that includes 34 police officers, ten dispatchers, two records clerks and an administrative assistant that provide 24-hour police coverage for their jurisdiction (*City of Seneca, 2019*). The Department has four locations that include the main office; an office for narcotics and investigations; one for training, the SWAT team, warrants unit, and victim's services; and one that focuses on downtown and community police services. The Department also operates a K-9 unit and a forensic crime scene unit. Seneca's Police Department operates a total of 48 vehicles that include patrol vehicles, a mobile command unit, transport van, three



heavy duty four wheel drive units for inclement weather and an armored vehicle for the SWAT team.

The ***Town of Walhalla Police Department*** is located on East Main Street in Walhalla. Department staff includes 13 patrol officers and one administrative staff in a variety of roles including administration, investigations, K-9 unit, road patrol, and school resource officer (*City of Walhalla, 2019*). The Department provides 24-hour police coverage with a vehicle fleet that includes 14 patrol cars.

The ***Town of Westminster Police Department*** is headquartered on East Windsor Street in Westminster. The Department employs seven full-time officers and one part-time code enforcement officer in roles including investigations, training, patrol, K-9, narcotics, records, and evidence (*City of Westminster, 2019*). Officers utilize 13 vehicles including seven active patrol cars and four spare patrol cars.

The ***Town of Salem Police Department*** is located on Park Avenue in Salem. The Department employs three full-time officers and one part-time officer who utilize four patrol cars to provide law enforcement services within the Town (*Town of Salem, 2019*).

Located on West Main Street in West Union, the ***Town of West Union Police Department*** has a staff of three that includes two full-time police officers and one part-time reserve officer (*Town of West Union, April 2019*). The Police Chief serves as one of the full-time officers and also as the K-9 officer.

F. HEALTH CARE

Access to quality health care is an essential component of community well-being. Building a healthy community ensures an acceptable quality of life for all residents and the prevention of many costly problems that inhibit the realization of full individual and community potential. The health care system encompasses a broad continuum of care that begins with preventative care and progresses through end-of-life care. Public health is negatively impacted when service gaps are present in this continuum. The number of practicing health professionals serving Oconee County is detailed in Table 7-10.

The locations of Oconee Memorial Hospital – Prisma Health Upstate, EMS, rescue stations, and the Rosa Clark Free Health Clinic are shown in Map 7-7. These and additional health care services are profiled in the following sections.

Table 7-10. Practicing Health Professionals in Oconee County, 2016

Health Profession	Primary Practice	Secondary Practice
Physicians	124	12
Family Practice	30	3
Internal Medicine	11	3
Obstetrics/Gynecology	7	0
Pediatrics	8	1
General Surgery	4	1
All Other (Specialists)	64	4
Nurses	597	32
Registered Nurses	440	20
Certified Nurse Midwives	1	0
Nurse Practitioners	33	2
Nurse Anesthetists	10	5
Licensed Practical Nurses	113	5
Other Health Professions	185	16
Dentists	31	9
Pharmacists	52	1
Physical Therapists	44	0
Occupational Therapists	18	1
Physician Assistants	16	1
Optometrists	6	1
Respiratory Care Practitioners	18	3

Source: South Carolina Health Professions Data Book,
S.C. Office for Healthcare Workforce, 2016

1. Oconee County Emergency Medical Services and Rescue Squad

Oconee Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responds to E-911 and other emergency medical calls within Oconee County. Oconee EMS is operated by Oconee Memorial Hospital - Prisma Health and is headquartered at the Emergency Medical Services building on the Oconee Medical Campus on Memorial Drive in Seneca. EMS services are available 24 hours a day to respond to 911 medical or trauma-related emergencies, transports to other facilities, and medically necessary transports such as for dialysis or physician appointments. The Department utilizes five advanced life support ambulances and employs more than 45 medics who are certified to provide both basic and advanced levels of care under the medical direction of the Oconee Memorial Hospital's emergency department physicians (*Oconee EMS, 2019*).

Emergency Medical First Response is provided throughout Oconee County by seven non-transport rescue squads and multiple fire departments. The rescue squads are staffed by a pool of 170 volunteers, who provide a SCDHEC licensed emergency medical responder base level of service, with multiple units working at the emergency medical technician level. The mission of the first response program is to supplement and support the response of the advanced life support ambulances provided by Oconee EMS - Prisma Healthcare. Oconee County Emergency



Medical First Response responded to more than 3,200 calls for medical service in FY 2017-2018. Oconee County EMS and Rescue Squad locations are listed in Table 7-11 and shown in Map 7-8.

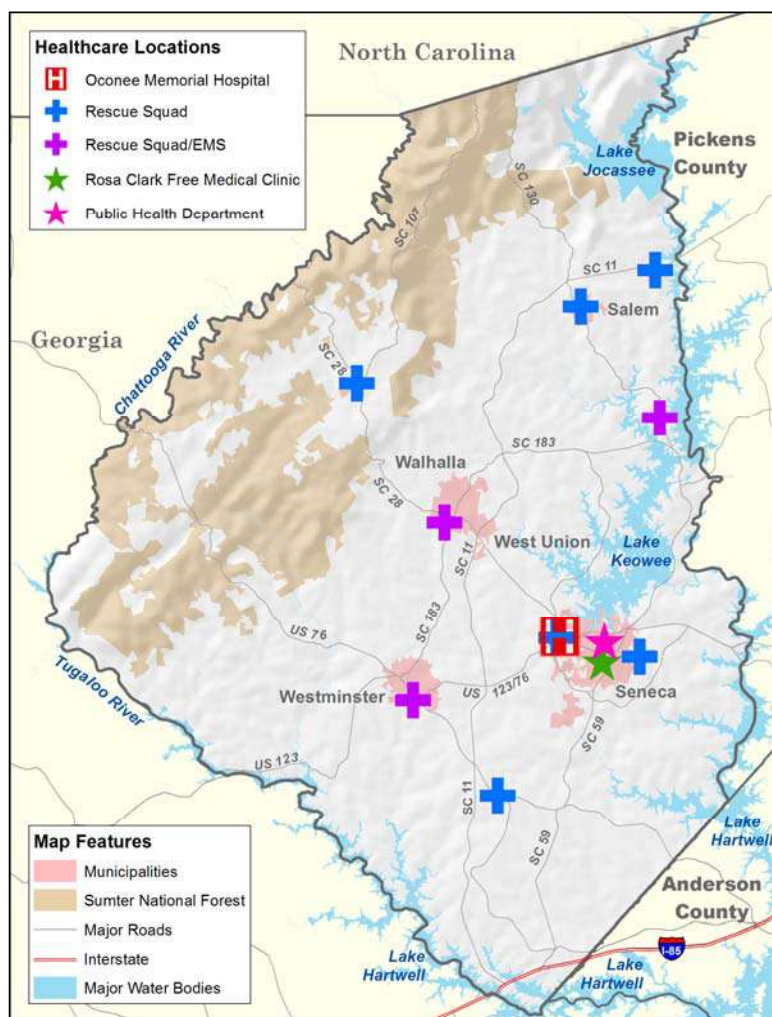
Table 7-11. Oconee County EMS and Rescue Squads, 2019

Stations	Location
Oconee EMS	
<i>Oconee EMS Headquarters</i>	<i>Memorial Dr., Seneca</i>
Keowee (co-located with Fire Department)	Maintenance Rd., Salem
Westminster (co-located with Rescue Squad)	Emergency Ln., Westminster
Walhalla (co-located with Rescue Squad)	S.Church St., Walhalla
Oconee County Rescue Squads	
<i>Oconee Rescue Squad Headquarters</i>	<i>Emergency Ln., Westminster</i>
Salem (Cliffs) Rescue Squad (Substation)	Cliffs South Parkway, Salem
Mountain Rest Rescue Squad	Verner Mill Rd., Westminster
Oakway Rescue Squad	W. Oak Hwy., Westminster
Salem Rescue Squad	W. Main St., Salem
Seneca Rescue Squad	Goddard Ave., Seneca
Keowee Rescue Squad	Maintenance Rd., Salem
Westminster Rescue Squad	Emergency Ln., Westminster
Walhalla Rescue	S.Church St., Walhalla

Source: Oconee County Emergency Services, 2019



Map 7-8. Public Healthcare Locations



Source: Oconee County GIS Department, 2018

2. Oconee Memorial Hospital – Prisma Health Upstate

Oconee Memorial Hospital – Prisma Health Upstate has cared for Oconee County residents since 1939. The Oconee Medical Campus includes a 169-bed hospital that provides a range of inpatient and outpatient services, a long-term nursing care facility, and a residential hospice house. The Hospital includes a 24-hour emergency services department with 20 beds, a breast care center, critical care unit, a multidisciplinary cancer institute, laboratory, pharmacy, radiology, surgical services, and a women's center.

Prisma Health Upstate recently began construction of a 14,500 square foot facility on its Oconee campus in Seneca that will house a doctor residency program designed to address the need for primary care physicians in Oconee County and other rural Upstate areas. The facility, which is scheduled to open in 2020, is intended to house six faculty and 18 residents by 2022. The three-year program seeks to alleviate the shortage of doctors by providing training for primary care in

a rural-based practice. Evidence cited by Prisma Health Upstate indicates that physicians tend to stay and practice in the community where they receive residency **training**.

3. Services for the Elderly

The nation's aging population affects every segment of the social, political, and economic landscape, as significant changes in living patterns and conditions often accompany the aging process. The health and mobility of senior residents is of growing interest due to implications for public policy, healthcare, and long-term care costs. The increasing number of frail elderly is accompanied by a growing demand for home care and for institutional and community-based acute care and long-term care. The segment of the population suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's disease will continue to rise in the coming decades, while the costs of care will rise well above current levels. The financial and time demands on informal family and friend caregivers will also continue to rise. These changing responsibilities will shape housing, employment, and support service needs at the local level, where Oconee County residents aged 65 or older now comprise 21.5% of the population. This is higher than the 15.8% of individuals in this age group statewide (*American Community Survey 2013-2017*).

a. Senior Services

Most aging services are federally funded through the *1965 Older Americans Act*. This law requires that service districts be designated to plan and implement aging services. To that end, the Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging has divided the State into ten planning and service districts. The Appalachian Regional Council of Governments (ACOG) is the designated **Area Agency on Aging (AAA)** and **Aging and Disabilities Resource Center (ADRC)** for Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg counties. The role of the AAA is to plan, coordinate, administer, and assess a comprehensive and coordinated system of quality support services for older citizens. ACOG provides information, referrals, and assistance to older adults and caregivers, and operates a number of related programs. As an ADRC, they subcontract with local service providers for the delivery of services at the local level. Among the services given funding priority are transportation, adult day care, in-home and group respite care, congregate dining, home-delivered meals, insurance counseling, wellness and prevention, information and assistance, outreach, physical fitness, health promotion, and nutrition education and screening.

Senior Solutions is the leading provider of services to senior citizens in Oconee County. Originally known as the Anderson-Oconee Council on Aging, Senior Solutions is a non-profit agency that has served the needs of County seniors since 1977. The *Oconee Senior Center* on Perry Avenue in Seneca is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and offers games, a computer lab, library, a fitness center, and an outdoor walking track. Participants have access to exercise, dance, and educational classes and opportunities for day and overnight trips. Transportation is available to and from the facility. Lunch is provided daily to participants. Senior Solutions also provides home-delivered meals in Oconee County for persons 60 years of age and older who are ill and incapacitated, unable to leave home unassisted except for essential appointments, unable



to purchase or prepare food, or do not have someone in the home who is able to prepare meals on a daily basis.

b. Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities

As detailed in the Housing Element, there are two nursing homes in Oconee County. The Lila Doyle facility at Oconee Medical Center in Seneca provides 120 beds and the Seneca Health and Rehabilitation Center provides 252 beds. The County has six assisted living facilities providing a total of 380 beds, with six of the facilities in Seneca and one in West Union (Table 3-22).

4. Public Health

The ***Oconee County Public Health Department*** is located on North Townville Street in the City of Seneca and is a full service location for the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control. The Department provides a range of health-related services including immunizations, family planning, pregnancy testing, nurse-family partnerships for first-time moms, postpartum/newborn home visits, services for children and teens with special health care needs, immunizations, tuberculosis testing and treatment, testing for sexually transmitted diseases, and teen education and counseling. The Department also administers the *Women, Infants and Children* (WIC) program that provides food products, health screenings, and health information for women, infants, and children five years of age or younger in qualified families.

5. Rosa Clark Free Medical Clinic

The ***Rosa Clark Free Medical Clinic*** on Memorial Drive in Seneca has provided quality, affordable healthcare services since 1982 for area residents who are unable to pay physician costs for such services and those who receive Medicaid or Medicare. The Clinic provides primary and preventative care, mental health services, substance abuse screening and prevention, patient education, pharmaceutical services, supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), and health screenings. The Clinic also provides referral services for specialty care as needed. A second location on South Oak Street serves as a dental clinic. The Clinic hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

G. PARKS AND RECREATION

The provision of quality recreational activities and facilities benefits community residents of all ages. Parks and recreation facilities are valuable tools in showcasing the natural beauty of a community, in preserving open space, in attracting visitors, and in providing healthy and safe recreational options for residents.

Oconee County residents and visitors are fortunate to have access to numerous and diverse opportunities for recreation that include state parks, abundant water resources, nature and hiking trails, and a number of parks and recreation facilities. As detailed in the Natural Resources



Element, recreational opportunities in the County are particularly plentiful for outdoor enthusiasts. In addition to the scenic Chattooga and Tugaloo rivers, lakes Hartwell, Keowee, and Jocassee provide miles of shoreline, a number of public and commercial boat landings, and nearly unlimited opportunities for fishing and water sports. Recreation resources in Oconee County are detailed in the following sections and in Table 7-12, with locations of major recreation facilities provided in Map 7-9.

1. State Parks

There are three South Carolina State Parks and one State Historic Site in Oconee County. As profiled in the Natural Resources Element and shown in Map 7-9, the 644-acre *Devil's Fork State Park* provides the only public access to Lake Jocassee with boat ramps, a courtesy dock, lakeside villas, campsites, picnic shelters, playgrounds, and hiking and nature trails. *Lake Hartwell State Park* includes 680-acres on Lake Hartwell, with boat ramps, a courtesy dock, fishing pier, campsites, two cabins, a nature trail, playgrounds, and a picnic shelter. *Oconee State Park* in Mountain Rest is a 1,165-acre park that offers campsites, cabins, picnic shelters, playgrounds, lakes for fishing and boating, a swimming area, miniature golf course, and six trails that serve as the southern trailhead for the Foothills Trail. The Oconee Station State Historic Site includes two buildings on the National Register of Historic Places, a four-acre fishing pond, nature trail, a four-mile connector trail that joins with Oconee State Park, and the Station Cove Falls waterfall.

2. Public Parks and Recreation Facilities

Oconee County Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department (PRT) is headquartered in the County Administration Offices on Pine Street in Walhalla. The County's recreation efforts are guided by the Oconee County Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission that is comprised of seven members appointed by County Council. The Department has 17 full-time staff members that include the director, an operations specialist, park superintendents, park rangers, a curator, the Visit Oconee SC director, and the Visit Oconee SC sales manager.

There are 35 County and municipal outdoor park and recreation facilities encompassing nearly 572 acres in Oconee County. Eleven of the parks and facilities are owned and maintained by Oconee County, nine by the City of Seneca, eight by the City of Walhalla, six by the City of Westminster, and one by the Town of West Union. Visitors to these parks enjoy access to hiking trails, boating, fishing, camping, and swimming. Additional active opportunities include a disc golf course, public pool, baseball, softball and soccer fields, and courts for basketball, tennis, pickleball, horseshoes, and volleyball. The new Foothills YMCA is also currently under construction on a 14-acre site just outside of Seneca. Table 7-12 lists the parks and associated resources within the County, including size and facilities provided at each site.

As detailed in the Natural Resources Element and provided in the following table and map, Oconee County provides three large public parks that offer a wide range of activities for residents and visitors. The parks are popular with residents and visitors, with an attendance of more than



209,000 visitors in FY 2017-2018, including 13,653 overnight campers (*Oconee County Budget Document, 2018-2019*). The County also owns and maintains eight public boat ramps on Lake Hartwell.

Table 7-12. County and City Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facilities

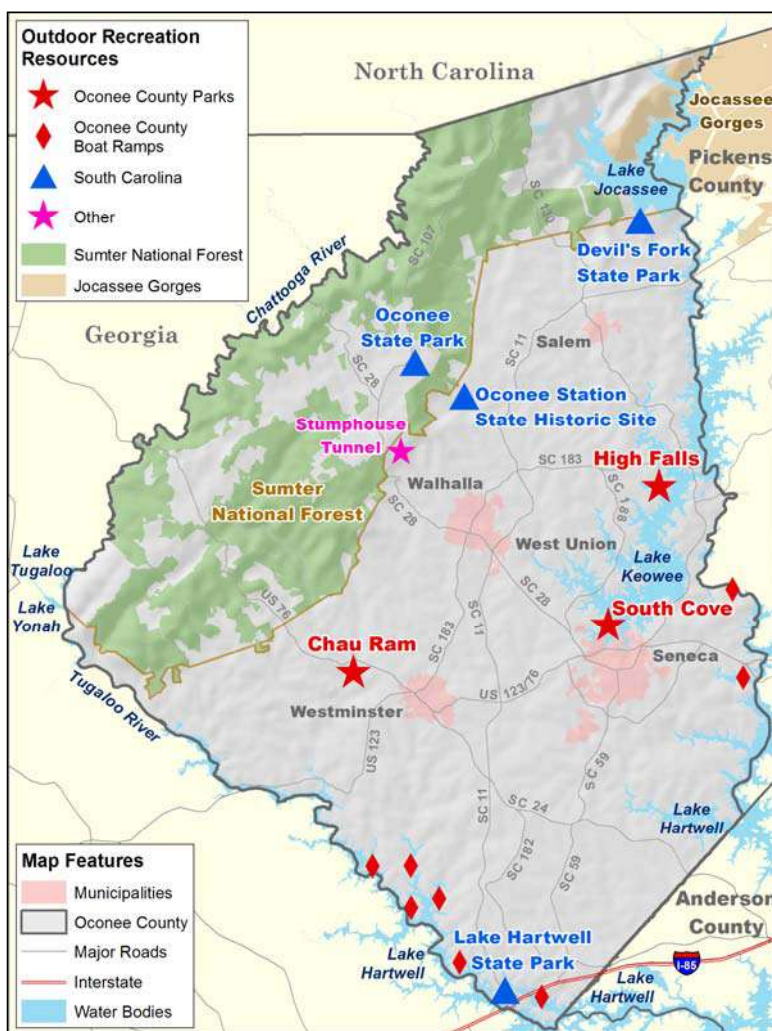
Facility Name	Acres	Facilities
Oconee County	368.0	Total Acres
Chau Ram Park <i>1220 Chau Ram Park Road, Westminster</i>	198.0	Confluence of Ramsey Creek and Chauga River, 40-ft. waterfall, 3 miles of hiking trails, 160-ft. suspension bridge, 26 tent and RV campsites with water and electricity, shower facilities, playground, 4 shelters, 18-hole disc golf course under construction
High Falls Park <i>671 High Falls Road, Seneca</i>	46.0	On Lake Keowee, 2 boat ramps, 91 campsites (10 waterfront) with water and electricity, fishing pier, 3 shelters, swimming area, miniature golf, horseshoes, playground, softball, volleyball, basketball courts
South Cove Park <i>1031 S. Cove Road, Seneca</i>	48.0	On Lake Keowee, 3 boat ramps, 86 campsites (46 waterfront) with water and electricity, 2 bath houses, a shelter and a recreational building, 4 pickleball courts, 3 tennis courts, basketball court, horseshoes, playground
Oconee County Boat Ramps: <i>Fairplay Recreation Area Lawrence Bridge Recreation Area Mullins Ford Recreation Area Choestoea Boat Access Mountain Bay Park Port Bass Boat Access Seneca Creek Boat Access South Union Boat Access</i>	76.0	On Lake Hartwell, all facilities provide boat ramps and Mountain Bay also provides a courtesy dock. Recreation Areas also provide restrooms, courtesy docks, and picnic areas. Fairplay Recreation Area also offers a picnic shelter, playground, and swimming beach.
City of Seneca	79.8	Total Acres
Blue Ridge Field <i>314 Holland Avenue, Seneca</i>	4.56	0.3 mile walking track, playing field, picnic shelters
Gignilliat Community Center <i>621 N. Townville Street, Seneca</i>	0.08	Indoor basketball court
Gignilliat Football Field <i>Stadium Drive, Seneca</i>	5.85	Football field
Gignilliat Picnic Area <i>Pine Street, Seneca</i>	4.0	Shelter, nature trail
Kapp Field <i>415 Quincy Road, Seneca</i>	1.6	Playing field
Library Park <i>307 S. 2nd Street, Seneca</i>	1.56	benches
Monarch Park <i>Hunter Oaks Drive, Seneca</i>	1.0	Playing field, playground, 0.15 mile walking trail
Norton Thompson Park <i>300 Main Street, Seneca</i>	3.25	Playing field, playground
Shaver Complex <i>698 W. South 4th Street, Seneca</i>	57.9	Baseball fields, basketball courts, playgrounds, 1.1 mile walking track, disc golf, mud run trail

Table 7-12. County and City Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Facility Name	Acres	Facilities
City of Walhalla	63.56	Total Acres
Chicopee Field <i>205 Branch Street, Walhalla</i>	7.13	Baseball and softball field (under renovation)
Church Street Field <i>North Church Street, Walhalla</i>	9.78	Athletic field
Memorial Field <i>207 North College Street, Walhalla</i>	3.27	Soccer and football field
Sertoma Field <i>272 Tulip Drive, Walhalla</i>	31.64	5 athletic fields, picnic shelter, 2 playgrounds, 1 mile walking track, 17.11 acre disc golf course
Stumphouse Tunnel/Issaqueena Falls Park	7.13	Pre-Civil War 1,617 foot tunnel, 200-foot waterfall, 0.4 mile hiking trail, lookout platform, picnic shelter, picnic areas
Walhalla City Gym <i>207 North College Street, Walhalla</i>	0.61	Indoor basketball
Walhalla City Park <i>105 N. Maple Street, Walhalla</i>	3.0	Basketball court, 2 tennis courts, soccer field
Walhalla City Pool <i>102 N. Maple Drive, Walhalla</i>	1.0	Pool and splash pad
City of Westminster	44.23	Total Acres
M.D. Cleveland Civic Center <i>98 Anderson Avenue, Westminster</i>	5.0	Indoor basketball courts
Pool Field <i>211 Lucky Street, Westminster</i>	6.0	Baseball and softball field, bathrooms, concession
W.P. Anderson Park <i>109 E. North Avenue, Westminster</i>	2.5	Playground, restrooms, 2 picnic shelters
Veterans Memorial Park <i>W. Windsor Street and Westminster Highway, Westminster</i>	>1.0	Gazebo, memorial markers
Hall Street Complex <i>351 Hall Road, Westminster</i>	25.39	Walking trail, playground, restrooms, outdoor basketball courts, 2 tennis courts, 2 baseball, soccer, and softball fields
Owen Stadium <i>504 Westminster Highway, Westminster</i>	4.34	Football and baseball fields, restrooms, concession, field house
Town of West Union	3.9	Total Acres
West Union Town Park <i>220 N. Highway 11, West Union</i>	3.9	Playground, picnic tables
Other Public Facilities	14.0	Total Acres
Foothills YMCA <i>U.S. Hwy. 123/Sheepfarm Road, Seneca</i>	14.0	UNDER DEVELOPMENT - Indoor pool, weight room, group fitness rooms, multi-purpose sports fields
Total all Facilities	571.5	

Sources: Oconee County Parks and Recreation Dept., City of Seneca Recreation Dept., City of Walhalla Recreation Dept., City of Westminster Recreation Dept. January 2019

Map 7-9. Major Recreation Resources in Oconee County



Sources: Oconee County GIS Dept., December 2018; SCDNR, January 2019

4. Trails

Trails are important recreational resources that can provide opportunities for exercise and experiencing nature. As presented in the Natural Resources Element, Oconee County currently has nearly 193 miles of trails (Table 6-6). These trails range in length from small spurs of less than a mile to the 77-mile Foothills Trail. Two passages of the 350-mile Palmetto Trail are in Oconee County - the Oconee Passage that connects Oconee State Park to the Oconee Station State Historical Site, and the new Stumphouse Passage that is the first phase of the planned 20-mile Stumphouse Mountain Bike Park.



H. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The goals, objectives and strategies for implementation (GOIS) table summarizes the actions that will be undertaken in the coming decade to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the Community Facilities Element.

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Goal 7.1. Provide adequate, safe, and efficient infrastructure to support current and projected needs.		
Objective 7.1.1. Work to guarantee adequate water distribution systems for present and future development in Oconee County.		
<u>Strategy 7.1.1.1.</u> Work to facilitate the establishment of a partnership with water providers aimed at expanding service into underserved unincorporated areas of the County and to encourage service providers to share resources where possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Other Water Providers 	Annually
<u>Strategy 7.1.1.2.</u> Partner with municipalities and other providers to inventory the current condition of their water infrastructure systems to determine ability to accommodate future growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Other Water Providers 	Annually
<u>Strategy 7.1.1.3.</u> Partner with adjacent jurisdictions on comprehensive water studies detailing availability from all sources and usages/outflows.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Adjacent Jurisdictions 	2023
Objective 7.1.2. Improve and expand wastewater treatment within Oconee County.		
<u>Strategy 7.1.2.1.</u> Expand sewer service throughout areas identified by the Land Use Element as potential areas of development, while implementing appropriate measures to avoid negative impacts on sensitive areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Joint Regional Sewer Authority (OJRSA) • Other Sewer Providers 	2021
<u>Strategy 7.1.2.2.</u> Work with neighboring jurisdictions when possible to establish regional efforts to expand sewer service into prime commercial and industrial locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Neighboring Jurisdictions 	Annually
<u>Strategy 7.1.2.3.</u> Partner with municipalities and the Joint Regional Sewer Authority to coordinate efforts to provide sewer throughout high growth corridors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • OJRSA • Other Sewer Providers 	Annually
<u>Strategy 7.1.2.4.</u> Establish partnerships with regional, state, and federal agencies to seek and secure funding for wastewater treatment facility upgrade and expansion needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • OJRSA • Other Sewer Providers • Relevant Regional, State and Federal Agencies 	Annually



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<u>Strategy 7.1.2.5.</u> Encourage septic tank and leach field education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Duke Energy • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers • SCDNR • SCDHEC • Other Potential Partners 	2025
Objective 7.1.3. Implement the goals, objectives, and implementation strategies of the Community Facilities Element.		
<u>Strategy 7.1.3.1.</u> Determine staff, facility and resource needs and partnerships to implement the Comprehensive Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2020
<u>Strategy 7.1.3.2.</u> Regularly update and utilize the County Capital Improvements Plan to systematically construct and upgrade facilities identified in the Community Facilities Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually
<u>Strategy 7.1.3.3.</u> Seek alternative funding sources to taxpayer financing of projects such as private partnerships and user-based fees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually
Goal 7.2. Manage community facilities, infrastructure, and public resources in a manner that ensures both current residents and businesses and future generations can enjoy the benefits and opportunities that make Oconee County an attractive and affordable place to live.		
Objective 7.2.1. Seek local, state, federal, and community funding support in efforts to expand and enhance educational opportunities for Oconee County residents.		
<u>Strategy 7.2.1.1.</u> Continue to support and enhance advanced job training and work readiness of residents through state-of-the-art training centers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • School District of Oconee County (SDOC) • Tri-County Technical College (TCTC) 	Annually
<u>Strategy 7.2.1.2.</u> Provide appropriate assistance to the School District of Oconee County in efforts to enhance and upgrade education and educational facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC 	2030
<u>Strategy 7.2.1.3.</u> Prioritize expansion and upgrades of libraries through the capital improvements plan and coordinate their location with available infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2025
<u>Strategy 7.2.1.4.</u> Continue cooperative efforts with the School District that optimize resources and result in savings for both.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC 	Annually
Objective 7.2.2. Upgrade solid waste facilities to improve services and allow for needed upgrades and expansion to provide for anticipated growth.		
<u>Strategy 7.2.2.1.</u> Work to reduce the volume of solid waste through increased recycling and composting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2023

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<u>Strategy 7.2.2.2.</u> Seek out innovative and alternative technologies that provide a long-term solution to current and projected solid waste needs and may also be used in the future to mitigate and reclaim closed facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2025
Objective 7.2.3. Regularly review public safety needs and enhance facilities as required and needed.		
<u>Strategy 7.2.3.1.</u> Review and upgrade existing emergency facilities plans on a regular basis, implementing established goals in a systematic manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Emergency Services Commission 	Annually
<u>Strategy 7.2.3.2.</u> Provide local public safety agencies appropriate assistance in obtaining funding to expand and upgrade operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Emergency Services Commission 	Annually
<u>Strategy 7.2.3.3.</u> Partner with private entities in the development of emergency satellite facilities and specialized response equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Emergency Services Commission 	Annually
<u>Strategy 7.2.3.4.</u> Continue to conduct regular updates to the County Disaster Preparedness Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Other Relevant Local Agencies 	Annually
<u>Strategy 7.2.3.5.</u> Work closely with local energy and utility providers and emergency management agencies to ensure coordination in the event of major natural or man-made events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Emergency Services Commission • Energy Providers • Utilities 	Annually
<u>Strategy 7.2.3.6.</u> Work with communications providers to ensure optimum communications access and speed for emergency services, local governments, businesses, residents, and visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Communications Providers 	Annually
<u>Strategy 7.2.3.7.</u> Communicate frequently with citizens of County about emergency plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually
Objective 7.2.4. Ensure access to quality and timely health care for all residents and visitors.		
<u>Strategy 7.2.4.1.</u> Review and upgrade County-owned medical and other healthcare facilities as needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually
<u>Strategy 7.2.4.2.</u> Continue to explore ways to increase the efficiency of emergency medical services throughout the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Emergency Services Commission • Oconee EMS 	Annually
Objective 7.2.5. Strengthen coordination among the County, municipalities, neighboring counties, regional and State agencies, and other public and private organizations.		
<u>Strategy 7.2.5.1.</u> Continue coordination with municipalities, neighboring jurisdictions and the State on matters relating to public safety, homeland security, emergency preparedness, and other matters of regional or statewide importance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Neighboring Jurisdictions • State Agencies 	Annually



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<u>Strategy 7.2.5.2.</u> Continue coordination of the provision of water, sewer, and electricity with municipalities and other public and private providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipal Utility Providers • Public & Private Utilities 	Annually
<u>Strategy 7.2.5.3.</u> Continue coordination with public and private organizations for the provision of services, programs, and facilities such as those for the elderly, for recreation, and for transportation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Other Public and Private Organizations • ACOG 	Annually
Objective 7.2.6. Ensure access to quality, lifelong educational opportunities for all residents.		
<u>Strategy 7.2.6.1.</u> Reduce the high school dropout rate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDOC • SC Dept. of Education • SC Dept. of Social Services 	Annually
Goal 7.3. Preserve, maintain, expand, and promote opportunities for recreation.		
Objective 7.3.1. Provide passive and active recreational opportunities to meet the diverse needs of County residents and visitors.		
<u>Strategy 7.3.1.1.</u> Partner with public and private entities to develop a countywide greenway system that will offer opportunities for nature-based recreation in areas where few currently exist and to connect existing parks to enable safe cycling routes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Other Recreation Providers 	2025
<u>Strategy 7.3.1.2.</u> Upgrade and maintain County parks and recreation facilities to encourage and promote ecotourism opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2025
<u>Strategy 7.3.1.3.</u> Evaluate, amend, and implement recreation plans, as necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission • Recreation Task Force 	2030
<u>Strategy 7.3.1.4.</u> Seek partnerships to explore ways to increase recreational opportunities for children and families throughout the County, such as access to sports venues and programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission • Municipalities • Other Parks and Recreation Providers 	2030
<u>Strategy 7.3.1.5.</u> Continue cooperative efforts and seek additional opportunities with the YMCA to provide recreational programs for County residents of all ages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC • YMCA 	2025

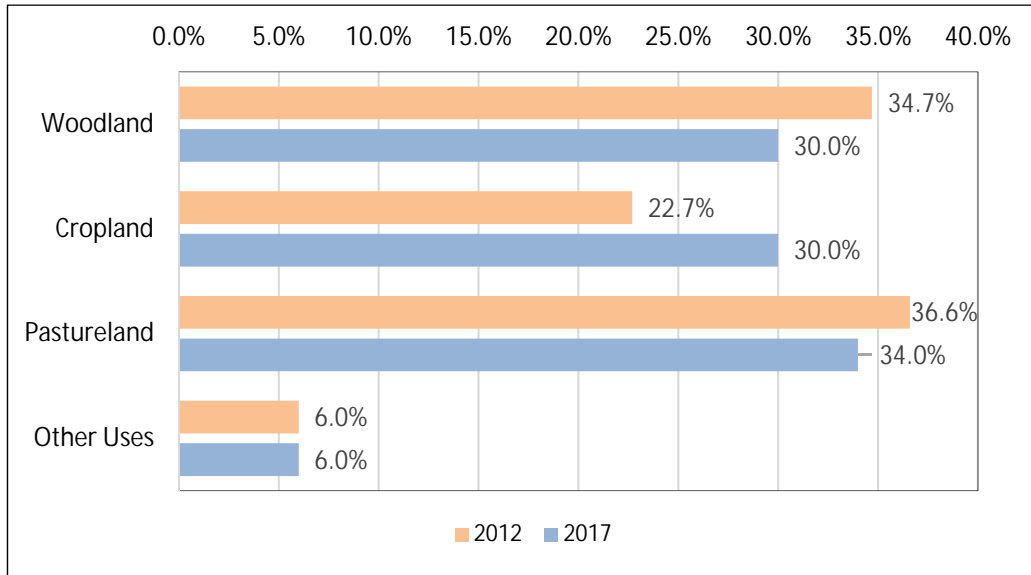


A. OVERVIEW

Agriculture and forestry are critical components of both the landscape and the economy of Oconee County. Based on Oconee County tax data, 51% of the County’s land area is currently in use for agriculture or forestry. However, of County land that is not included in the Sumter National Forest, nearly two-thirds is in agriculture or forestry use.

According to the Oconee Economic Alliance, Oconee County has nearly 900 farms encompassing more than 67,000 acres of land. Together these farms have a market value in products worth more than 121 million dollars. In addition to the economic benefits of agriculture and forestry, both land uses can contribute social, environmental, and health benefits. These benefits are explored in more detail throughout this element.

Figure 8-1. Oconee County Land in Farms by Land Use, 2012 and 2017



Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

Forestlands are important to the economy, character, environment, and overall health of Oconee County. Agricultural and forested lands are home to many of the area’s critical natural resources and provide valuable wildlife habitat, windbreaks, enhanced water quality, decreased ambient temperatures, groundwater recharge areas, mitigation of stormwater run-off and erosion, and open space. This link to natural resource protection should be respected and enhanced when possible through the use of easements, education, and value-added land use policies such as proper regulation, prevention and mitigation of incompatible land uses, and the appropriate location of public lands and infrastructure.

Farming and food security would appear to go hand in hand, but even counties with significant farm production can have areas where access to healthy foods is non-existent or challenging.



Reliable, convenient access to fresh fruit, vegetables, and proteins is a cornerstone of community sustainability and resilience. A healthy population contributes more to the local economy, uses fewer healthcare resources, and is central to community well-being and quality of life.

B. AGRICULTURE

Over the past century, agriculture in the U.S. has become more mechanized, industrialized, and dependent on and threatened by globalization. While much of the agriculture in the Upstate consists of relatively small farms, these trends have affected farming in Oconee County as well. More than half of Americans were farmers at the turn of the 20th century, and their farms typically were diverse in plants and animals, had a focus on family subsistence, and supported the local area. While this is still true on some small farms, the trend towards specialization and truck farming (producing products primarily for shipment often bypassing local markets) has had its impacts on the Upstate as well. However, a recent return to market-farming or direct-to-consumer farming is changing how some farmers do business.



AGRICULTURAL LAND PROVIDES BENEFITS BEYOND FOOD



open space and scenic views



biodiversity and wildlife habitat



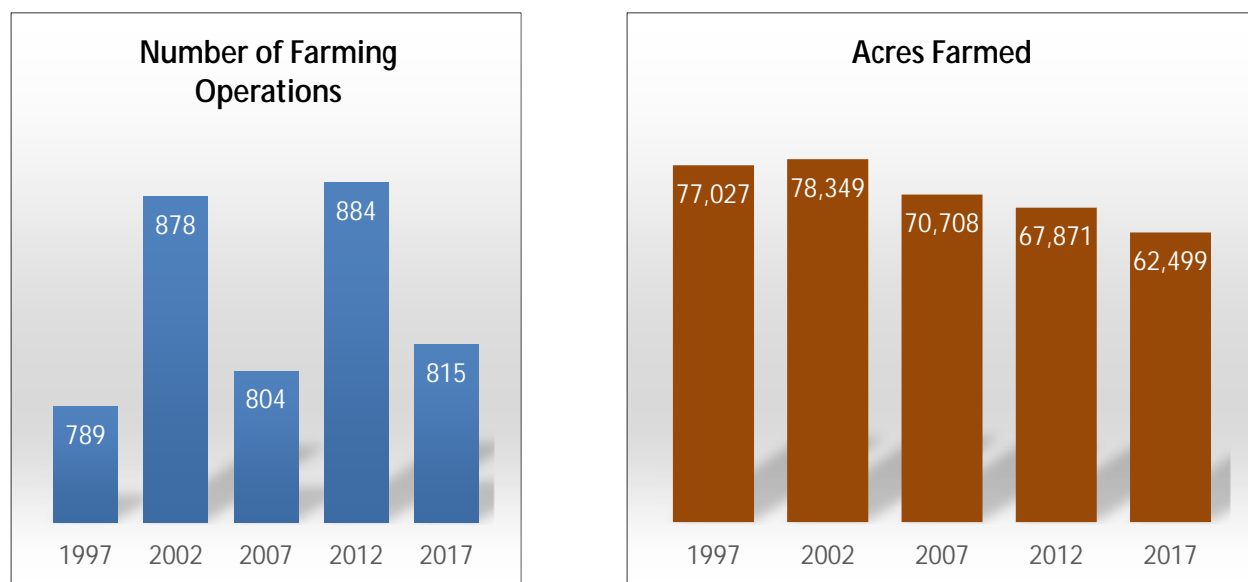
fire suppression, floodplain management, and carbon sequestration



recreation

Source: American Farmland Trust, "Farms Under Threat: The State of America's Farmland," May 9, 2018

Figure 8-2. Farming Operation Characteristics in Oconee County



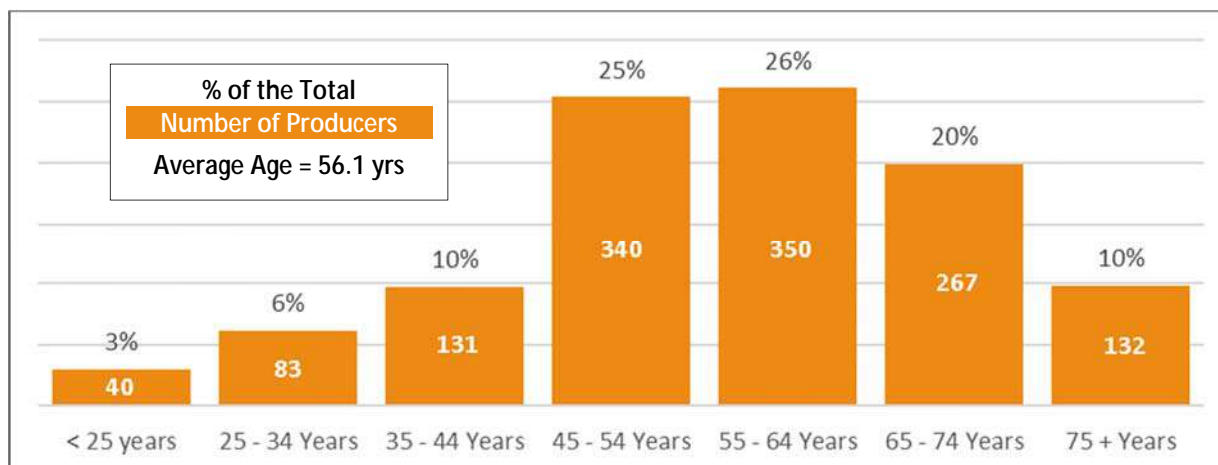
Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture

The number of farming operations in Oconee County has fluctuated over the past 30 years from a low of 789 in 1997 to a high of 884 in 2012. While the number of farm operations fell from 884 in 2012 to 815 in 2017, the average farm size remained 77 acres. In 2007 there were only 804 farms, but the average farm size was larger at 88 acres and the total acreage in farms was almost 71,000.

1. Producer and Income Characteristics

Commonly known as farmers, people who work on farms are called “producers” by the U.S. Census Bureau. The Census Bureau expanded its definition of producer in the 2017 Census to include anyone involved in making decisions for a farm. This change resulted in an increase in the number of people who were reported as producers as compared to previous years. The latest Census also collected information on young producers and new and beginning producers. These new data provide additional insight into the profile of farmers in Oconee County and should help to identify trends that might be significant in supporting local farming.

Figure 8-3. Age of Oconee County Producers, 2017

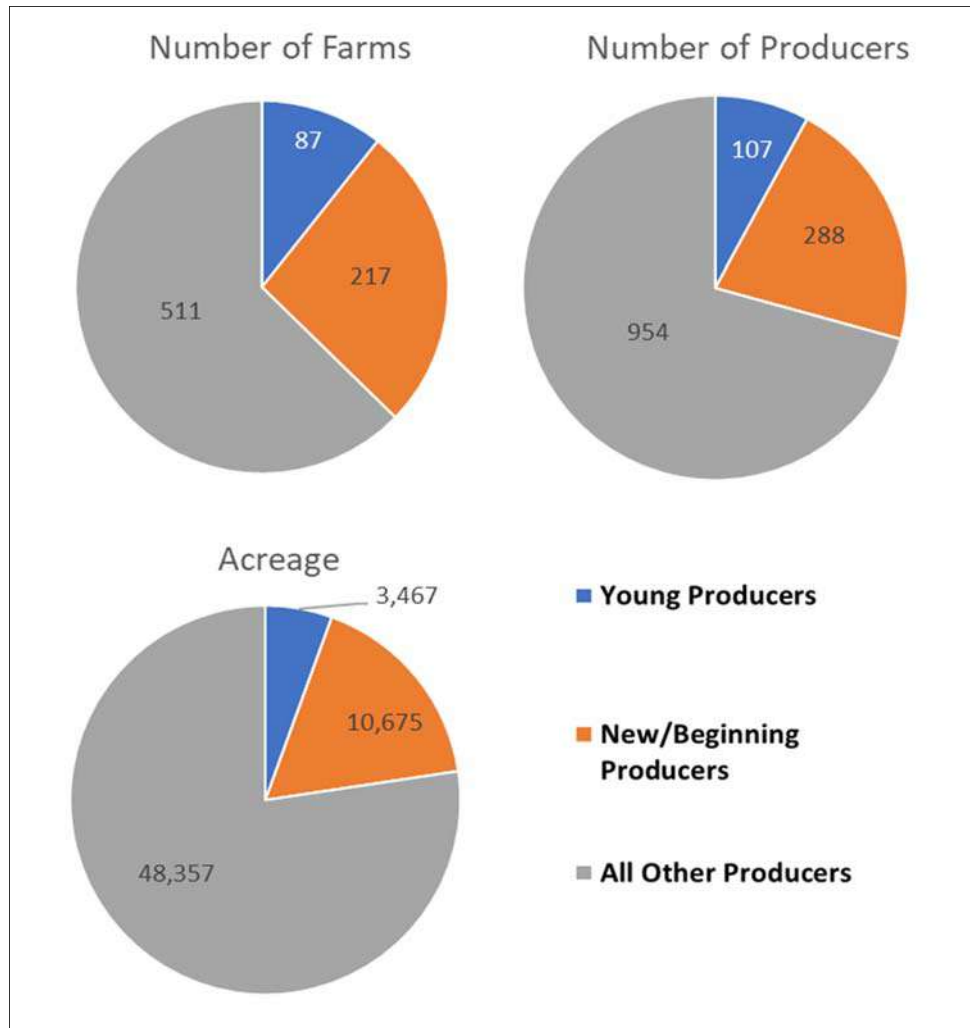


Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture

Of the 1,343 producers working Oconee County farms in 2017, 749 were aged 55 years or older. The average age for all producers is 56.1 years (Figure 8-3), slightly less than the U.S. average of 57.5 years. Fewer than one-third of all producers in Oconee County has been in operation less than 11 years and less than 40 percent indicated that farming was their primary occupation. The future of farming depends on the successful transition of farms from one producer to another, for young people to see value in the farming way of life, and on successfully supplementing farming income with diversification and non-farming related jobs that provide greater income stability. Only a small portion of the primary producers are young, aged 35 or less years, as characterized by the 2017 Census of Agriculture (Figure 8-4). A larger percentage of all producers were characterized as “new or beginning,” defined as no more than ten years of experience, which is a title irrespective of age.



Figure 8-4. Characteristics by Producer Type in Oconee County, 2017

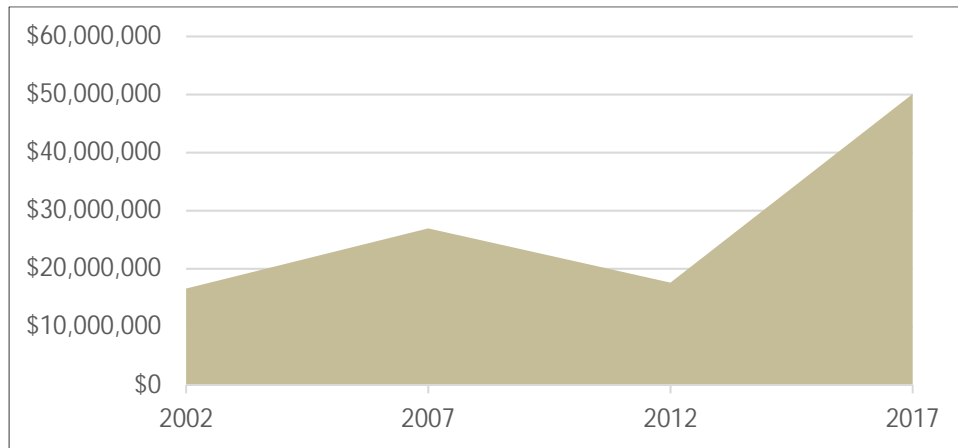


Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture

Although the number of acres farmed in the County is declining, the net income of farm operations has increased. The greatest increases in the number of farms by farm sales has been in categories with annual sales of \$50,000 or more.

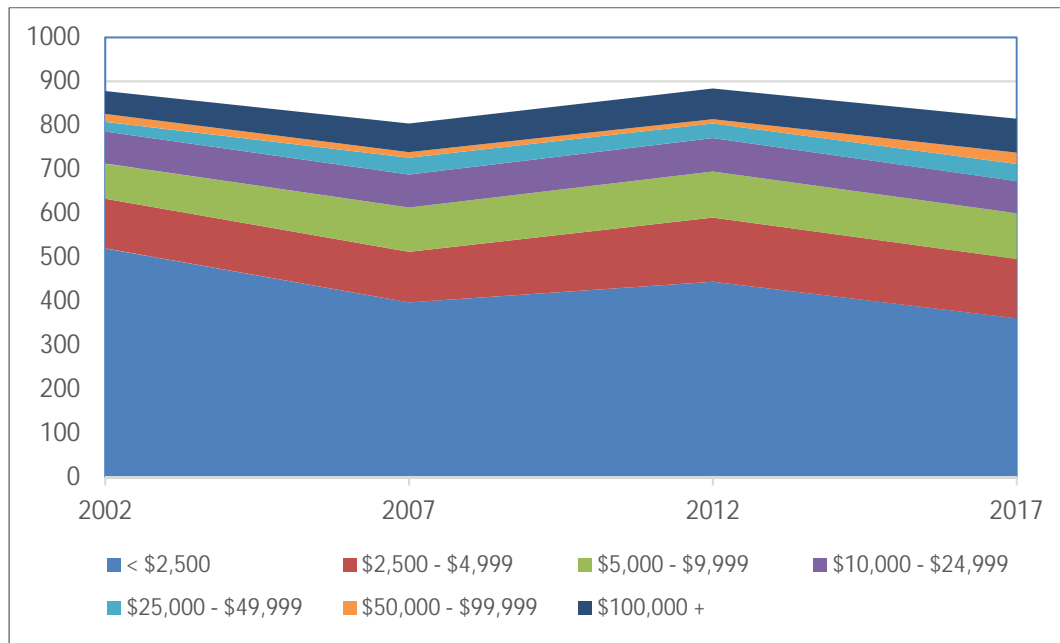


Figure 8-5. Net Farm Income in Oconee County



Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture

Figure 8-6. Number of Farm Operations by Sales in Oconee County



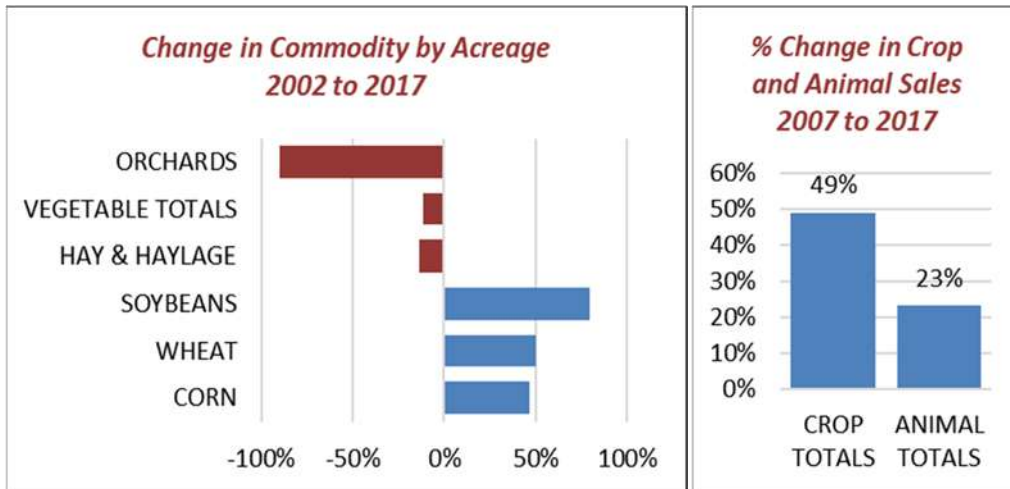
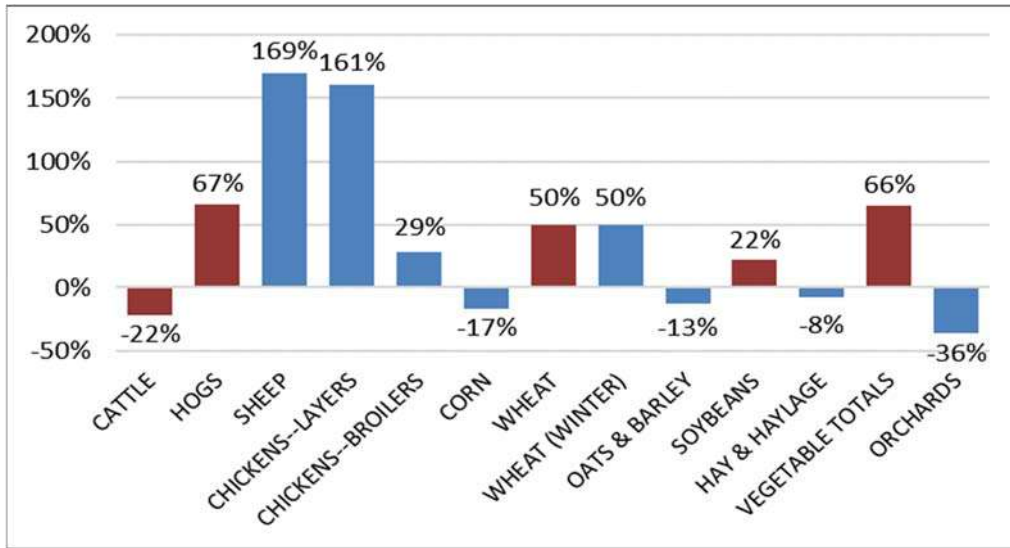
Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture

2. Commodities

A variety of vegetable, fruit, and animal products are produced on Oconee County farms, but livestock, poultry, and animal products represent 97 percent of the total share of farm sales. Oconee County is South Carolina’s number 1 poultry and egg-producing county. It ranks 77th nationwide out of 3007 counties. A distant second, in terms of sales and rank, is the production of cattle and calves, followed by milk, hogs and pigs, sheep and goats, equine, apiculture and aquaculture. As Figure 8-7 indicates, the number of sheep farms increased significantly between 2002 and 2012, but sheep remain a minor contributor to farm sales overall.



Figure 8-7. Changes in Farm Commodities



Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture



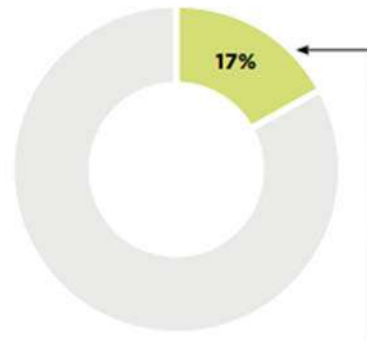
3. Agricultural Land

Soil data provided by the USDA reveals that only 7% of the County’s land area (30,650 acres) is prime farmland. Prime farmland, as defined by the USDA, is “land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses.” Prime farmland soils produce the highest yields with minimal inputs of energy and economic resources and the least damage to the environment. Soils that have a high water table or are subject to flooding may also qualify as prime farmland if protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during growing season. These soils comprise 2.4% of the land area in Oconee County, encompassing 10,138 acres of land.

It is possible for states to define and delineate soils that, while not designated as prime farmlands, may be farmlands “of statewide importance” for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. In general this land includes soils that nearly meet the requirements for prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops – some as high as prime farmlands given favorable conditions – when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Based on criteria set by the State of South Carolina, 10.4% of the land area of Oconee County (44,829 acres) is considered to have soils of statewide importance to agriculture.

Map 8-1 illustrates the location of prime and other important farmlands in Oconee County. Prime farmlands are located throughout the County but are sparser in the higher elevations in the Sumter National Forest.

U.S. AGRICULTURE RELIES ON HIGH-QUALITY FARMLAND

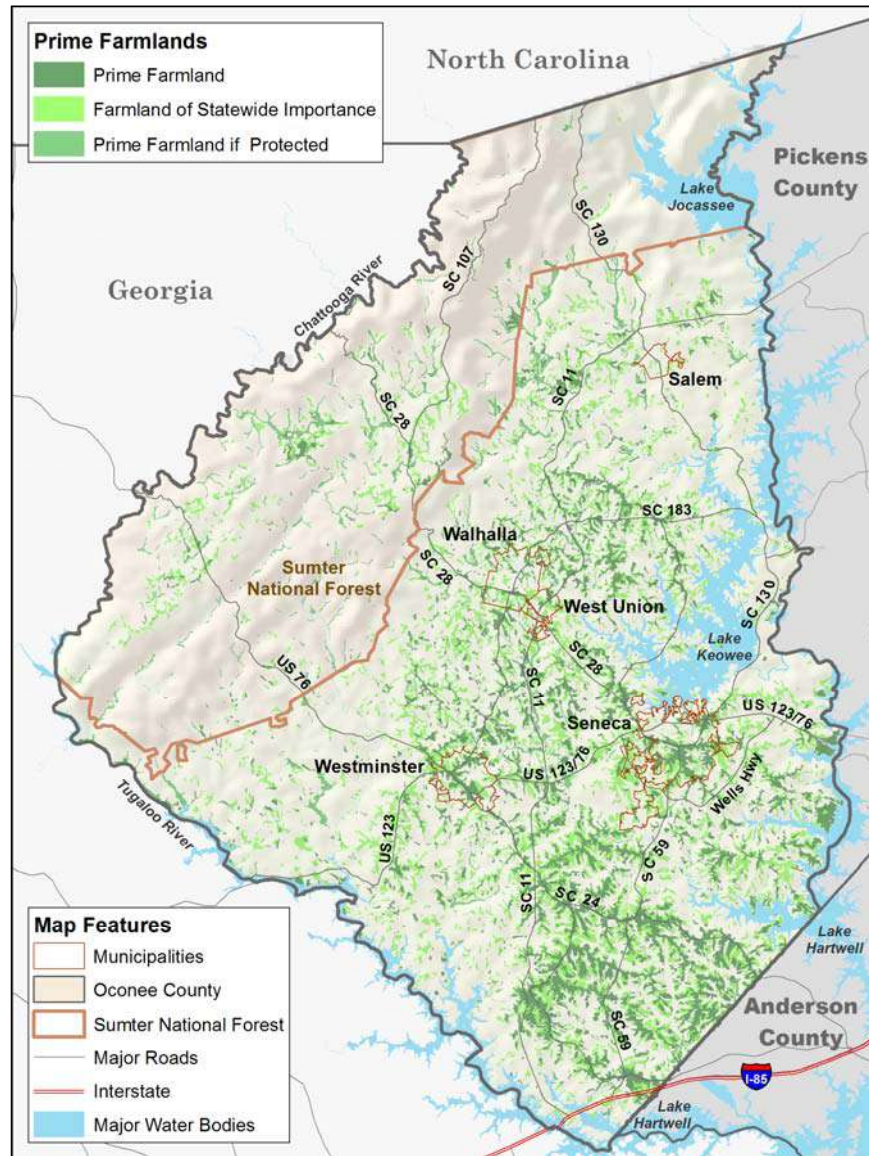


Only 17 percent of the land in the continental U.S. is agricultural land with the productivity, versatility, and resiliency (PVR) to produce a wide variety of crops with minimal environmental limitations.

Source: American Farmland Trust, “Farms Under Threat: The State of America’s Farmland,” May 9, 2018



Map 8-1. Prime Farmlands



Source: USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey, 2019



4. Threats to Prime Farmland

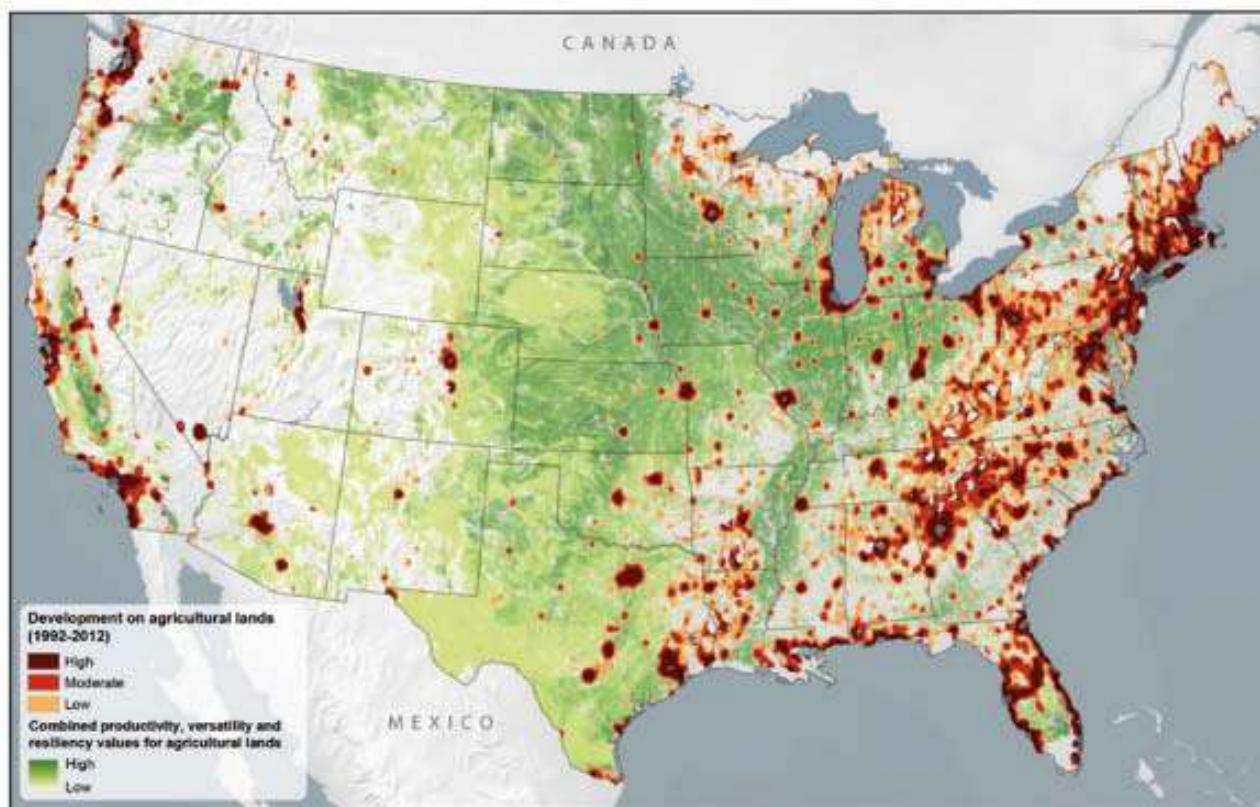
Prime farmland has been disappearing across America as urbanization has crept, leap-frogged, and in some cases, steamrolled across the landscape. The sharp increase in road and utility expansion in the 20th century divided many rural farms, opening vast areas for urban and suburban development. The relatively flat, cleared land preferred by farmers is also preferred by developers looking to minimize the cost of land preparation. However, the loss of farmland is not caused solely by the need for land to accommodate growth. It is also caused by the low relative value placed on farmland as compared to suburban and urban development.

Farm loss isn't just market economics at work, it also represents the collective valuation of farmland by the public. Studies conducted by the USDA Economic Research Service indicate that when people were asked to rank the appeal of various landscapes, farms, particularly cropland, received a low ranking. However, farms were ranked above developed sites in general. Their research provides some insight into the dynamics of farmland conversion, and perhaps is worth considering when crafting public education materials and arguments for farmland preservation.

Between 1982 and 2012, an estimated 395,900 acres of South Carolina's prime farmland were developed (*Farmland Information Center, 2016*). Conversion of prime farmlands to non-agricultural use is a concern, as the farming industry is forced to bring more marginal agricultural land into production. Marginal farmland has less productive and more erodible soil, often with irregular topography such as steeper slopes that require greater labor, equipment, and material costs. Map 8-2 indicates the entire Upstate experienced moderate to high rates of land conversion from 1992 to 2012.



Map 8-2. Conversion of U.S. Agricultural Land to Urban and Low-Density Residential Development Between 1992 and 2012



The development of agricultural land is shown in relationship to the low-to-high continuum of productive, versatile, and resilient values for agricultural land. The conversion of agricultural land to urban and low-density residential uses between 1992 and 2012 is shown as high (dark brown-red, > 25% conversion within a 10-kilometer (6.2 miles) radius), moderate (light brown-red, 10–25% conversion) and low (tan, 5–10% conversion). Urban areas are shown in gray.

Source: American Farmland Trust, "Farms Under Threat: The State of America's Farmland," May 9, 2018

An essential step in protecting valuable farmland is to ensure that policies on growth and development recognize the importance of local farming to the health, well-being, and economy of Oconee County. To accomplish this, the County will need to educate its citizens on the value of local farming activity, the need to promote and support local farmers through right-to-farm policies and similar measures, why it is necessary to allow value-added and farm-related land uses and activities in agricultural areas, and other topics that may arise that are central to preserving Oconee County's farmland. South Carolina has adopted laws to help protect farms from nuisance suits. These laws can be found in *Title 46, Chapter 45 of the S.C. Code of Laws §§ 46-45-10 to 46-45-70* (2004).

Farmers often need to diversify to stay in business. Diversification could mean using a part of the cornfield for a Halloween maze, turning raw products like grapes into other products like jelly, direct selling through farm stands, establishing restaurants and ice cream shops, or inviting schools and tourists to tour or participate in farm life and production. Zoning that tightly

separates land uses by type ignores the interdependence of different uses and synergies that these types of mixed uses can create. An example is a code that restricts agricultural land to primary production but not the processing of agricultural products. Policies that limit options may make farmland preservation very difficult.

The lack of policies to protect farming from the encroachment of inappropriate land uses can lead to additional problems. Agriculture can be noisy and smelly. Farmers often work in the very early morning hours and late evening hours. Farmland can require chemical application that non-farming residents find offensive or scary. For these reasons and many others, conventional residential subdivisions often do not make good farm neighbors. Clustering, buffering, and controlling residential density near farm borders are ways the County could help protect farmers from nuisance complaints. Another way to protect farmland and provide for residential growth is a new trend called “agrihoods.” These are subdivisions that integrate farmland into their overall design, making it a core feature much like golf courses have been in the past. Agrihoods appeal to people who want good, steady access to local farm produce. Agrihoods already exist in the Upstate, including one in the City of Greenville.

Land subdivision is a threat to many prime agricultural areas in the Upstate. Many communities have tried to deal with this through a policy of requiring very large minimum lot sizes, but is this right for agriculture? Just how small is too small for a legitimate farming enterprise? The answer to these questions has changed over time, especially with the recent emphasis on “eat local” and organic farming. Answers also vary by farming technique and product. For example, hydroponic greenhouses may only need an acre, while cattle farming can require more than 35 acres. Subdividing land into estate lots or gentleman farms and allowing land splits to accommodate family lots can eat away at Oconee County’s prime farmland over time. At the same time, it is crucial to permit subdivisions that support housing for farm laborers and businesses that provide goods and services to the farming community, issues that often are overlooked in local land use policies.

Some counties, such as Charleston County and Henderson County, N.C., have created or are in the process of creating Voluntary Agricultural and Forestal Areas programs. These programs seek to prevent the low-density sprawl development pattern and non-agricultural/forestal use encroachment that can lead to destruction of the agricultural and forestry industry.

C. FORESTRY

Roughly 63 percent of Oconee County’s land area is forested, totaling 251,354 acres (*S.C. Forestry Commission, www.state.sc.us/forest/oco.htm, 2019*). Much of the county’s forestland lies within the Sumter National Forest. Hardwoods and some pines are the dominant native trees (*USDA, Soil Survey of Oconee County, S.C., 1963*). While forestry is a key component of the economy in the state and region, Oconee County ranks 45th out of 46 counties in delivered value of timber. This is at least partially due to the lack of major processing mills that exist in or near other counties.



Statewide, the total annual economic impact of South Carolina’s forest industry is over \$21 billion, employing over 84,000 residents (*S.C. Forestry Commission, Economic Contribution of South Carolina’s Forestry Sector, 2017*). Oconee County ranks 45st statewide in delivered value of timber sold, with a harvested timber delivery value exceeding \$4.7 million (*S.C. Forestry Commission, Value of SC’s Timber Delivered to Mills in 2017*). South Carolina forest products go to many places including international destinations.

Table 8-9. Top 10 S.C. Forest Products Markets, 2016*

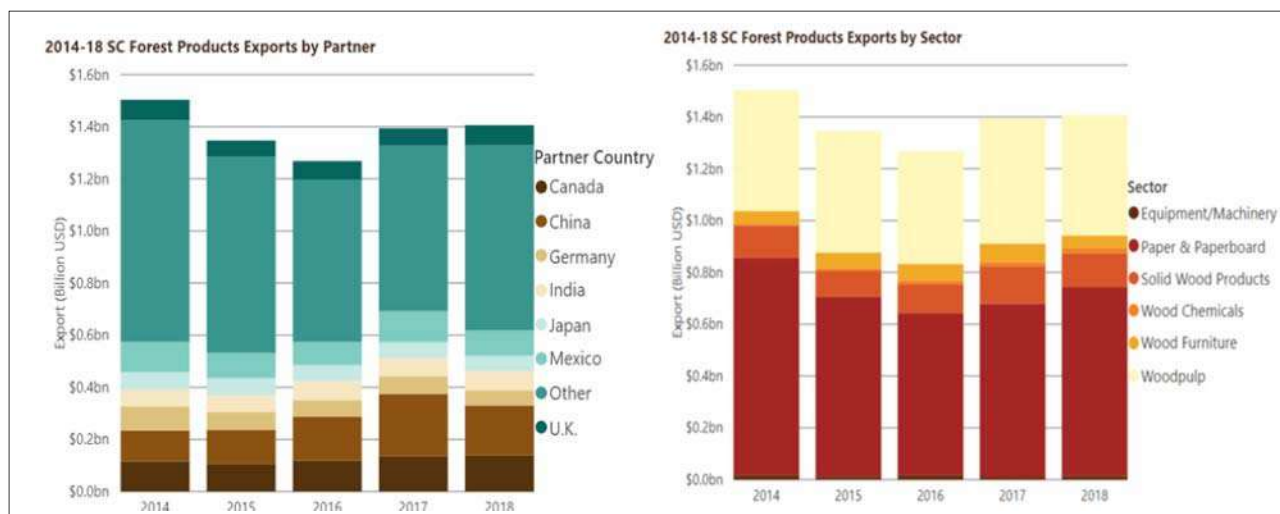
Rank	Wood-based chemical products	Solid wood products	Wood Pulp	Paper and paperboard	Paper manuf. machinery	Furniture	Prefabricated buildings
1	Finland (13)	China (0)	China (0)	Canada (0)	Poland (11)	Russia (0)	Chile (11)
2	Korea, South (1)	Canada (0)	India (2)	United Kingdom (2)	Canada (-1)	Thailand (3)	Spain (10)
3	China (-2)	India (0)	Japan (-1)	Germany (0)	Malaysia (0)	Canada (-1)	Canada (-1)
4	Brazil (-2)	Australia (0)	Mexico (3)	Mexico (-2)	Germany (0)	Egypt (2)	Bahamas (-1)
5	Canada (2)	Japan (1)	Korea, South (0)	China (0)	Argentina (11)	Germany (-1)	China (7)
6	Thailand (-2)	United Kingdom (2)	Italy (0)	Italy (0)	Mexico (-4)	Malaysia (2)	Romania (6)
7	Mexico (1)	Vietnam (0)	Colombia (3)	Ecuador (1)	Australia (2)	India (0)	Australia (5)
8	Kuwait (6)	Bangladesh (10)	Poland (-5)	India (1)	Colombia (-2)	China (3)	Korea, South (4)
9	India (-3)	Pakistan (1)	Netherlands (-1)	Netherlands (11)	Brazil (6)	Brazil (1)	Colombia (3)
10	Netherlands (-1)	Korea, South (2)	Belgium (1)	Egypt (9)	Netherlands (11)	Australia (19)	France (-6)

■ Asia | ■ Europe | ■ Central/South America & The Caribbean | ■ North America | ■ Oceania | Africa

* 2015-2016 ranking changes are shown in parentheses

Source: S.C. Forestry Commission, South Carolina Forest Products Industry Export Report: 2016

Figure 8-10. Forest Export by Partner and by Sector, 2014 to 2018



Source: S.C. Forestry Commission, South Carolina Forest Products Exports: 2018



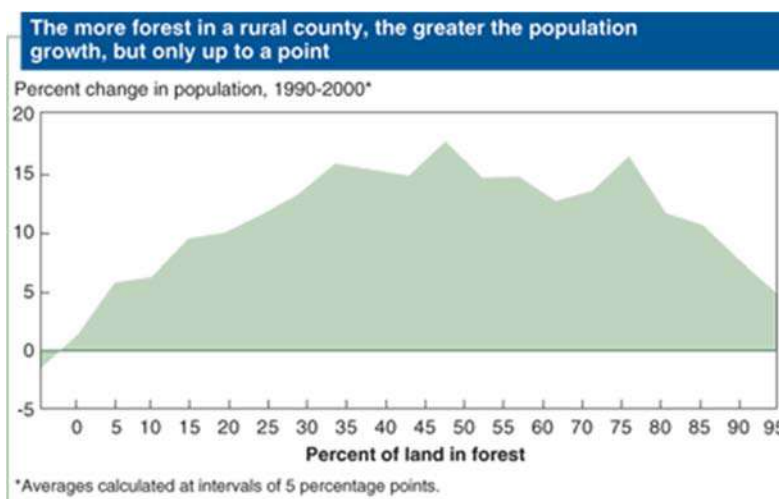
In addition to providing commercial wood-based products, forestland is productive in many other ways. It converts carbon dioxide into oxygen, provides shade to help mitigate hot summer temperatures, serves as critical habitat and food sources for many wildlife and plant species, lessens wind impacts, and conserves water and reduces stormwater impacts by filtering pollutants and aiding groundwater recharge. In light of these benefits, the South Carolina Forestry Commission works with communities across the state to develop urban forestry programs to promote the conservation and re-establishment of forests in developed areas.

Forestland and tree canopy also contribute significantly to the character of Oconee County. Studies conducted by the USDA Economic Research Service indicate that forestland is a compelling factor for where people choose to live.

Tree canopy has a positive impact on community appearance and forests are important recreational resources. State-level data recently released by the S.C. Forestry Commission indicate that forest-based recreation contributes \$1.6 billion annually to the state’s economy.



Figure 8-11. Relationship Between Forestland and Population Growth



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service, "Farm Programs, Natural Amenities, and Rural Development," February 1, 2005

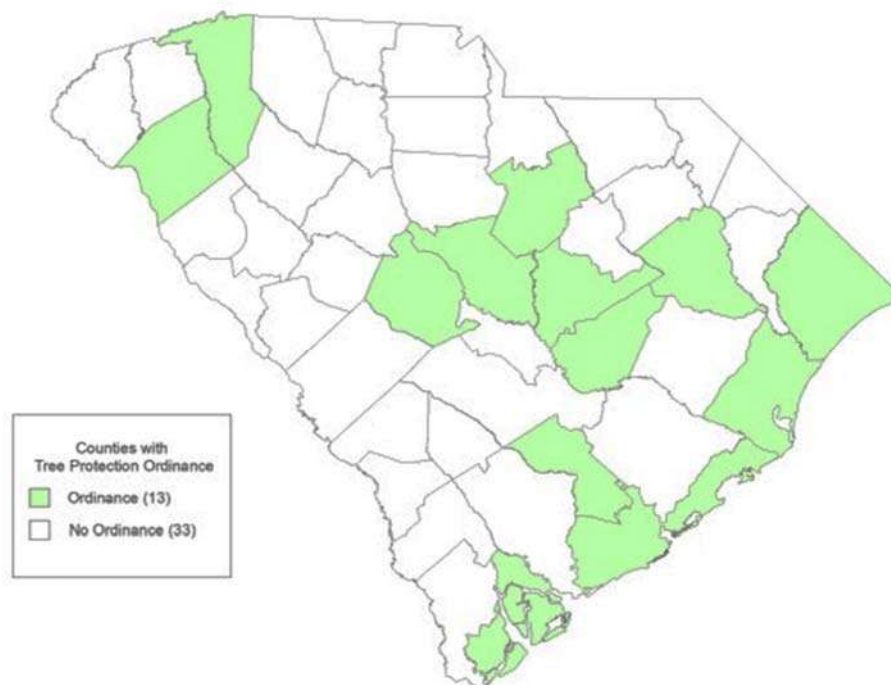
1. Threats to Forestry

There are many threats to forestlands such as clearing, grubbing, and grading for development, insect infestations and disease, invasive species, inadequate forestry management, and fire. Historically, the greatest loss in forestland occurred when land was cleared for farming. This trend reversed as a result of incentives that encourage the conversion of farmland into forests. Urbanization is now the primary cause of deforestation in South Carolina. The South Carolina Forestry Commission is working with communities across the state to develop urban forestry programs that protect remaining forestland and encourage the re-establishment of forests and tree canopies in urban areas.



Source: Clemson University

Map 8-2. Counties with Tree Protection Ordinances



Source: *South Carolina's Forest Resource Assessment and Strategy (Forest Action Plan)*
<http://www.trees.sc.gov/scfra.htm>

Wildfire is a threat to all South Carolina forestland and the urban areas which it abuts. On average, the South Carolina Forestry Commission fights 3,000 forest fires across the state each year. Nearly all are human-related, meaning that humans directly caused or indirectly contributed to fire creation or spread.

Forests contain “fuels” that are highly flammable, including any natural material, living or dead, that will burn. Common fuels include leaf litter, limbs, pine straw, and certain species of shrubs and trees that ignite easily. The greatest area of wildfire concern is in the wildland-urban interface, where development abuts forestland. Wildfires in and adjacent to developed areas present many challenges, not the least of which is access to the fire through developed sites. Business owners and residents often unwittingly provide fuel for fires by using of one or more of the fuels mentioned above in site landscaping. The South Carolina Forestry Commission works with communities to develop community wildfire protection plans to lessen risk to buildings and forestland. Plans provide an assessment of risk and a list of mitigation measures that can be undertaken to minimize wildfire risk. The goal of the Commission is to have as many “fire-adapted” communities in South Carolina as possible. A fire-adapted community is one in which the citizenry is informed, prepared, and taking action to reduce wildfire-related incidents.

South Carolina has many communities that are recognized nationally through the Firewise USA program established and managed by the National Fire Protection Association where residents

are actively reducing wildfire risks. Ten of the 33 communities currently listed are in Oconee County including:

- Keowee Key (2006)
- Wynward Pointe (2007)
- Lake Yonah (2009)
- Keowee Harbours (2009)
- Chickasaw Point (2009)
- Waterford Pointe (2009)
- Waterford (2010)
- Beacon Shores (2015)
- Port Santorini (2016)
- Emerald Pointe (2017)



Funding for the USDA Forest Service's National Fire Plan is available through grants to communities wishing to implement a fuels mitigation and educational program. The International Code Council has also created an *International Wildland-Urban Interface Code* to assist communities interested in using regulation to help reduce wildfire risk.

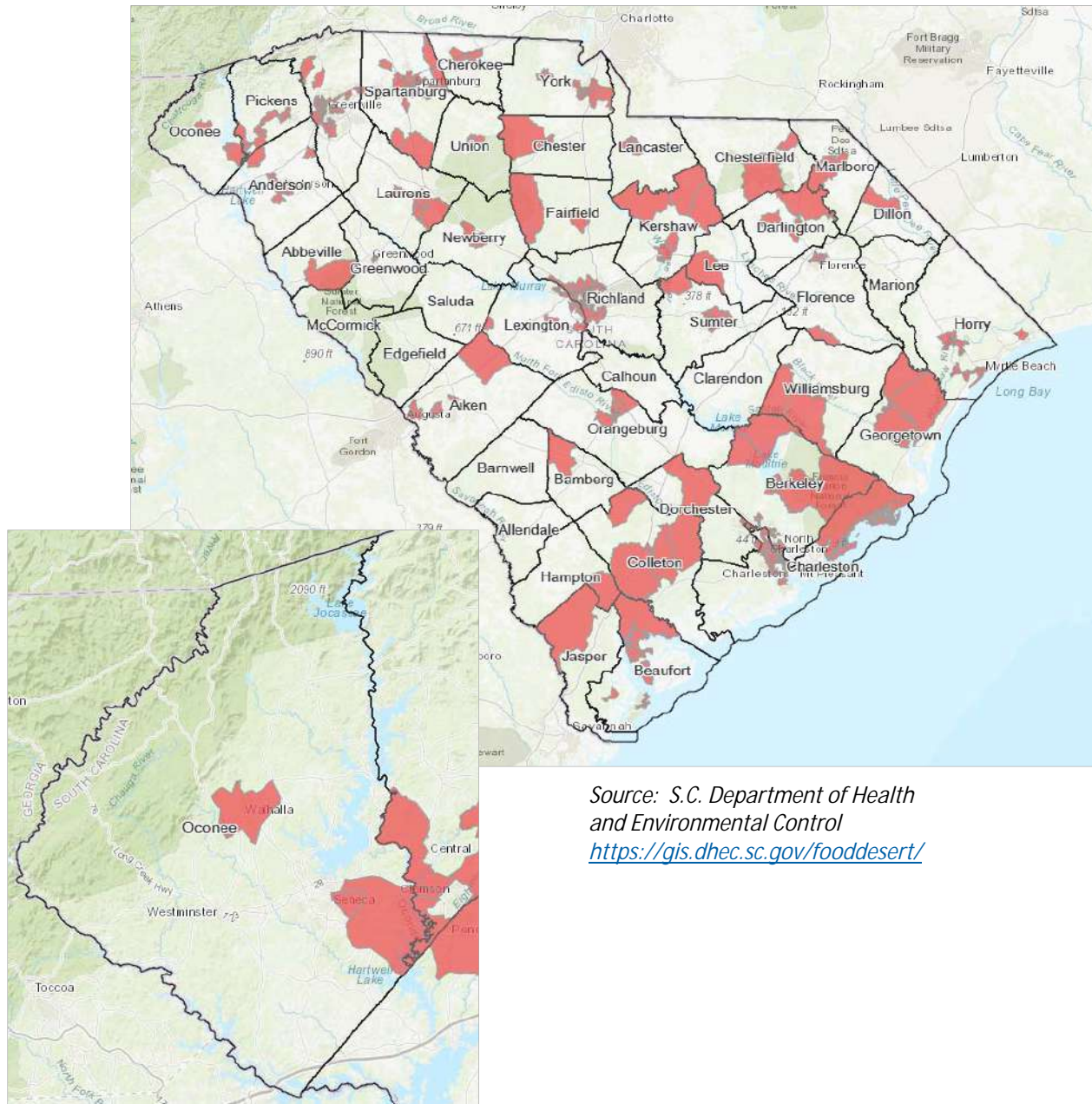
D. FOOD SECURITY

Food access is a critical element of community prosperity and security and should be an integral feature of planning at regional, county, community, and neighborhood levels. Successfully addressing food security requires cooperation and coordination from the public, private, and non-profit sectors, and collaboration with a variety of entities including retailers, transit services, and non-profits focused on healthy food education and childhood nutrition. Collaborative efforts to identify potential funding sources to address needs are also needed.

The lack of access to a variety of fresh and healthy foods can be a problem for many low-income and other transportation-challenged populations. The USDA Economic Research Service defines individuals lacking access as those who live more than one mile from a grocery store or supermarket. Low-income residents in areas without access to a grocery store who cannot raise their food and frequently lack reliable access to transportation often rely on neighborhood convenience stores which typically stock foods that are highly processed, high-caloric, and have a low-nutritional value. Children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity.

The USDA has mapped areas that lack access to fresh and healthy foods, known as food deserts. The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control has published the USDA map for the state. This data is shown in Map 8-3 along with a focused map of Oconee County.

Map 8-3. Food Deserts in South Carolina and Oconee County



Although these maps are based on 2015 data, there is little reason to believe food access has improved significantly since then. As the maps indicate, there are likely significant access issues around Walhalla and from Seneca to Pickens and Anderson counties.

Ensuring access to healthy food is both a land use and a transportation issue and requires a holistic approach to successfully address the problem. Such an approach can include increasing public transit; making sure land use policies allow a mix of uses in residential areas that allows grocery stores, farmers markets, and similar fresh food outlets; and educating citizens on



backyard gardening and food preservation to encourage a certain amount of self-sufficiency where possible. Land use policies that do not allow grocery stores and supermarkets in residential areas create food deserts. Being aware of where food deserts likely exist, as indicated by Map 8-3, and using that information to inform transit service routes is also vital since the market forces that drive retail location favor moderate and high-income areas over low-income communities.

Many communities are turning to gardening as one solution for healthy food access. Backyard gardens may significantly improve healthy food choice. Community gardens are also becoming more popular across the country, as are subdivisions centered around gardens or small community farms, referred to as agrihoods. Some communities have also begun to plan edible gardens instead of ornamentals in public spaces. Gardening encourages physical activity and provides the benefits associated with other outdoor activities. The National Recreation and Park Association now offers advice on how to integrate gardening (backyard, community, public) into parks and recreation programs for children and adults. These programs teach important skills including food preservation.

There is a growing movement centered on eating locally grown and produced foods. To support this in Oconee County, the County should ensure it has no unnecessary barriers that restrict accessory processing on farms and in commercial areas (e.g. jams, jellies, wine, pickles), encourage farmer's markets and farm stands, work cooperatively to link producers with retail consumers (restaurants, bars, etc.) as part of a broader economic development strategy, and assist with marketing local farm products.

Food security can be a much larger problem and impact many more people than shown on Map 8-3 during natural disasters and other emergencies that affect transportation systems and food production. Few emergency management plans currently address food access and security, but more communities are beginning to add this very critical link. In 2010, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), in cooperation with USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) developed best practices and guidelines for state and local emergency response efforts for incidents involving the nation's food supply. Oconee County can request state assistance in developing a local food security and response element for the County's Emergency Preparedness Plan. It should also coordinate planning, prevention, and response efforts regionally since disasters and emergencies frequently affect multiple jurisdictions at one time.



Source: S.C. Farm Bureau

E. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The table of goals, objectives and implementation strategies (GOIS) summarizes the actions that will be undertaken in the coming decade to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the Agriculture Element. The Agricultural Advisory Board of Oconee County will be a driving force and an accountable agency for all goals, objectives, and strategies below.

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Goal 8.1. Support and Protect the Agricultural Industry in Oconee County.		
Objective 8.1.1. Recognize important agricultural land as a valuable natural resource to protect for future generations.		
Strategy 8.1.1.1. Advocate use of “Best Management Practices” in farmland and forest operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil & Water Conservation Commissions • Oconee County • Clemson Cooperative Extension (CCE) • SC Forestry Commission 	2025
Strategy 8.1.1.2. Encourage and support collaboration between landowners and public and private agencies in the development of ecologically and economically sound plans for preservation and restoration of farmland and forests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • CCE • Conservation groups 	2025
Strategy 8.1.1.3. Work with SCDOT and other state and regional agencies to ensure projects for infrastructure facility maintenance and expansion will not be detrimental to the continuation of agriculture and silviculture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SCDOT • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce • Municipalities 	2021
Strategy 8.1.1.4. Limit non-agricultural development in productive and prime agricultural areas to densities and development patterns that are consistent with the continuation of economically viable agriculture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021
Strategy 8.1.1.5. Support state legislation that links incentives to continue farming (such as state income tax credits or differential assessment for property taxes and affirmative supports for the business of agriculture) with controls preventing conversion of the recipient's agricultural land to non-farm uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce 	2025



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<p><u>Strategy 8.1.1.6.</u> Seek grants and take advantage of state and federal programs to assist with the purchase of development rights and agricultural easements on prime agricultural land.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce • Conservation groups 	<p>2023</p>
<p><u>Strategy 8.1.1.7.</u> Ensure that the impacts to adjacent farms and forest land is part of the deliberation and decision making for proposed public projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce 	<p>2021</p>
<p><u>Strategy 8.1.1.8.</u> Work with the state Real Estate Licensing commission to add an “Agricultural Disclosure Act” to ensure that potential home/land/business purchasers are made aware that agricultural activity is occurring on land adjacent to the purchaser’s property of interest.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • State Real Estate Licensing Commission 	<p>2023</p>
<p><u>Strategy 8.1.1.9.</u> Activate vacant and underutilized County owned property to facilitate a program that invites entrepreneurs, non-profits, residents, and other groups to begin entry-level agricultural businesses, community gardens, and pilot programs for engaging residents in the agricultural processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • NGO • Not-for-Profit organizations • CCE • Municipalities • Agriculture Organizations • School District of Oconee County (SDOC) 	<p>2023</p>
<p><u>Strategy 8.1.1.10.</u> Create a staff position of Agricultural communication and coordination to coordinate and communicate with farmers, foresters, local governments, agricultural groups, and the public on agricultural and forestry matters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>2023</p>
<p>Objective 8.1.2. Enhance agricultural operations and opportunities.</p>		
<p><u>Strategy 8.1.2.1.</u> Work with state and federal agencies to attract agribusiness-related grants and revenue sources and support efforts to establish pilot programs related to new agricultural technologies and products.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>2021</p>
<p><u>Strategy 8.1.2.2.</u> Provide appropriate assistance to expand non- traditional and specialty agribusiness opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>2021</p>
<p><u>Strategy 8.1.2.3.</u> Ensure the ability of a farm to have a farm-related business onsite.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>2021</p>



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<u>Strategy 8.1.2.4.</u> Promote the establishment of new farm enterprises through support of training for interested persons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service 	2023
<u>Strategy 8.1.2.5.</u> Allow agricultural products processing facilities to locate in areas with convenient access to farms, but ensure that they do not negatively impact rural character or scenic vistas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2025
<u>Strategy 8.1.2.6.</u> Support South Carolina right-to-farm laws and consider adopting a county right-to-farm policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce 	2021
<u>Strategy 8.1.2.7.</u> Promote farm stands and farmers markets in rural and urban areas and local food hub(s) with adjoining counties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service • FARM Center 	2023
<u>Strategy 8.1.2.8.</u> Consider adopting a Voluntary Agricultural and Forestal Areas program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service 	2025
<u>Strategy 8.1.2.9.</u> Encourage and support programs that educate and engage residents of all ages in aspects of farming and agriculture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee Cooperative Extension Service • Agriculture Advisory Board • Organizations such as FFA and the Oconee Cultivation Project • FARM Center 	2023
Goal 8.2. Protect Oconee County's Forest Resources.		
<u>Strategy 8.2.1.1.</u> Maintain an accurate inventory of important forestland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SC Forestry Commission • US Forest Service 	2025



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Strategy 8.2.1.2. Coordinate and plan infrastructure and development to protect forestland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SC Forestry Commission • SCDOT • US Forest Service • Conservation Groups 	2025
Strategy 8.2.1.3. Support efforts to permanently preserve important forestland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SC Forestry Commission • US Forest Service • Conservation Groups 	2025
Strategy 8.2.1.4. Work with the Forestry Commission to educate citizens about wildfire hazards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SC Forestry Commission • Rural Fire Departments • US Forest Service • CCE 	2025
Strategy 8.2.1.5. Consider adopting the International Wildland-Urban Interface Code, or relevant portions, to help mitigate wildfire risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Rural Fire Departments 	2030
Goal 8.3. Ensure continuing access to healthy, fresh food.		
Objective 8.3.1. Eliminate food deserts and ensure access to healthy food.		
Strategy 8.3.1.1. Integrate food system policies and planning into County land use, transportation, and capital improvement plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Local food banks • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service • SDOC 	2030
Strategy 8.3.1.2. Encourage residents to supplement personal food sources with gardening and fresh food preservation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Cooperative Extension Service • SDOC 	2025
Strategy 8.3.1.3. Recruit, support, and incentivize businesses that provide healthy food choices in all areas of the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce • CCE 	2023
Strategy 8.3.1.4. Revise land use policies to require healthy food access as a part of development standards, prohibit private restrictions that limit gardens, and community gardens, in residential areas when economic incentives are offered by the County to a developer .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2023



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<p><u>Strategy 8.3.1.5.</u> Work collaboratively with non-profits and other entities to address the needs of vulnerable populations (e.g. elderly, children, homeless).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Local non-profits • Faith-based community • Farmers' markets 	<p>2023</p>
<p><u>Strategy 8.3.1.6.</u> Support new opportunities for distribution of locally and regionally produced food.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>2023</p>
<p><u>Strategy 8.3.1.7.</u> Revise the zoning code to require healthy food access as a part of development standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	<p>2023</p>
<p><u>Strategy 8.3.1.8.</u> Work collaboratively to ensure that regional emergency preparedness programs include food access and distribution and are working toward the goal of establishing regional capacity for feeding the population for 2 to 3 months in an emergency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SC Emergency Management • Private organizations • NFPO • Disaster relief organizations 	<p>2023</p>
<p><u>Strategy 8.3.1.9.</u> Demonstrate the use of agriculture as a method of mitigating climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC • CCE • Agricultural groups • Private organizations • Municipalities • Conservation groups • Local non-profits • Faith-based community • Farmers' markets • Oconee County Chamber of Commerce • Local food banks • SC Forestry Commission 	<p>2023</p>



Chapter 9. Transportation Element

The transportation-land use connection influences both land use and transportation planning. While the most significant role that transportation plays in land development is in providing access, transportation facilities serve as a critical element of the built environment, creating both connections and barriers. For instance, a high-volume, four-lane highway may connect key areas of a community for vehicular travel, but safety concerns can deter pedestrians who need to cross the highway to get to resources on the other side. Traffic congestion on a thoroughfare can also be a barrier, causing motorists to seek alternative routes through residential areas. An understanding of these relationships is critical to solving and even preventing transportation related problems such as congestion, higher energy consumption, and impaired air quality, threats to public health and safety, and decreased access to services and employment.

Debate on the relationship between transportation and land use typically hinges on whether the transportation network should be planned to accommodate anticipated land uses and growth, or should the transportation network evolve organically to accommodate traffic generated by the location of land uses and subsequent growth patterns. Ideally, transportation networks should be planned to anticipate and accommodate future needs. However, funding for costly transportation infrastructure is limited, particularly at the local level, with resources focused on alleviating immediate problems such as congestion, road maintenance, and safety issues caused by increased traffic volume.

A transportation system is defined as any means used to move people and products. While roads comprise the majority of most transportation systems, they are not the only viable component. Effective transportation systems are broad, multi-modal networks that include options such as rail, air, shipping, public transit, cyclists, and pedestrians. The Transportation Element provides an analysis of transportation systems serving Oconee County including existing roads, planned or proposed major road improvements and new road construction, existing and proposed transit projects, and proposed and existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities and projects.

A. ROAD NETWORK

According to the *2017-2022 South Carolina Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)*, projected demand for travel in the State will continue to rise due to economic growth, as well as increases in the number of resident drivers and driving activity. While travel volume is generally highest on the Interstates, federal, and state highways and many local roads also experience traffic congestion and road wear associated with increased motor vehicle travel. An examination of the local road network will enable Oconee County to work with regional partners to plan for transportation needs for the coming decade, particularly as they relate to future land use.



1. Road Naming and Addressing

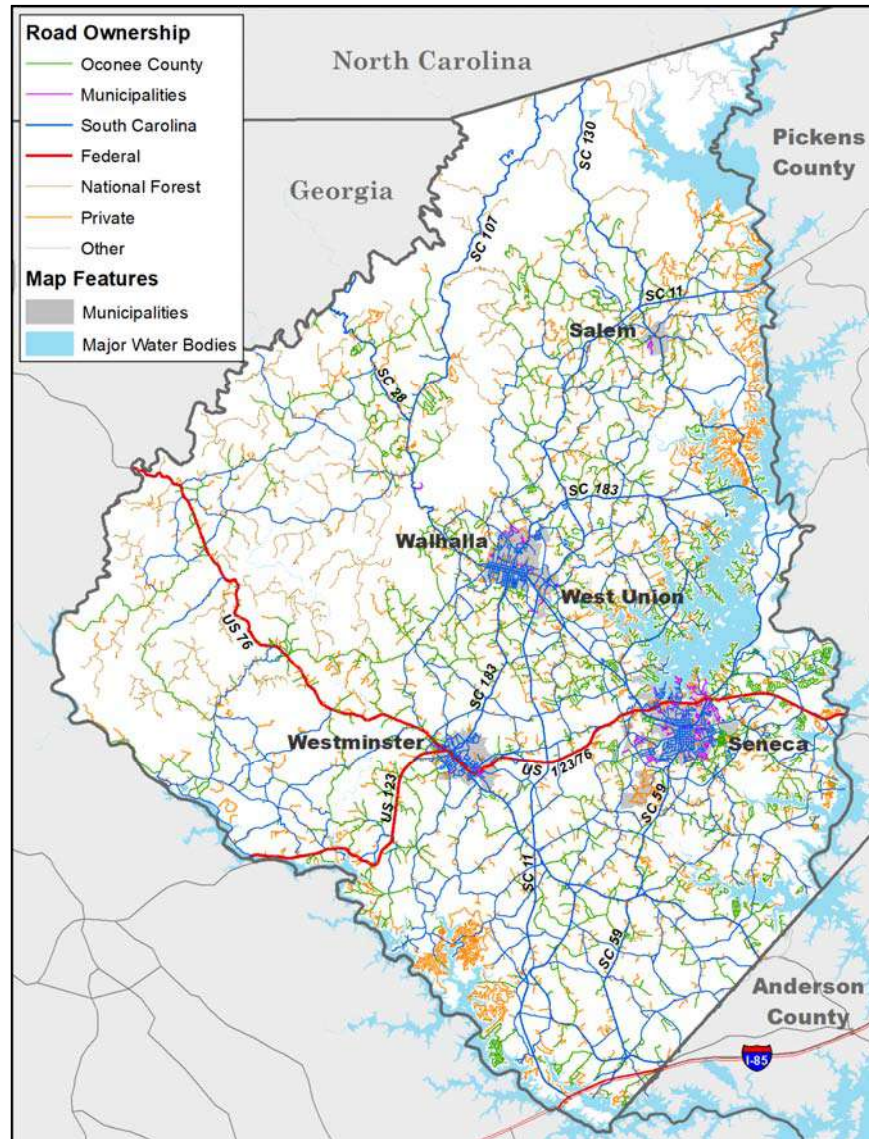
The Oconee County Addressing Office administers the assignment of addresses, the naming of subdivisions, and road naming and renaming countywide per the requirements of the County's *Road Naming and Addressing Policy*. Road names and subdivision names must be submitted and approved by the Addressing Office before preliminary and final plat approval for all new developments.

2. Road Network

There are more than 2,419 miles of roads within Oconee County. The County owns and maintains 659 of these road miles. The State of South Carolina maintains 830.9 miles of roads in the County that include 8.7 miles of Interstate 85, 44.2 miles of U.S. Highways, and 778 miles of primary and secondary State roads. The U.S. Forest Service maintains 189.5 miles of roads in the Sumter National Forest. Nearly 27.6 miles of road are maintained by municipalities, including 20.89 miles in Seneca, 4.21 miles in Walhalla, and 1.3 miles in Westminster. Less than one mile of road is maintained in both Salem and West Union. The remainder of roads in the County are privately owned and maintained. Several large residential developments own and maintain their road systems, including Foxwood Hills, Keowee Key, and Chickasaw Point. Map 9-1 illustrates road ownership in Oconee County.

The County's Roads and Bridges Department has 35 employees divided into several different crews. The Arbor Crew trims and removes trees from rights-of-way, the Mowing Crew mows the rights-of-way, the Construction Crew builds new roads and upgrades existing roads, and the Asphalt Crew repairs potholes and patches and paves new and existing roads. The Pipe Crew installs and repairs culverts, the Maintenance Crew maintains the County's gravel roads, and the Sign Crew installs and maintains street name and traffic signs.

Map 9-1. County Road Ownership, 2018



Source: Oconee County GIS Department, 2018

3. Road Paving

Maintaining dirt roads can be costly, while the return on investment for paving can take a number of years. However, the paving of dirt roads provides many benefits to residents as well as local governments. Paving seals the road surface from rainfall, preventing erosion and protecting the base and sub-grade materials. It also eliminates dust, makes vehicular travel much smoother, and accommodates a wider range of vehicles such as tractor-trailers.

The life of a road, regardless of the surface, is affected by the number of vehicles and the weight of the vehicles using it. Generally, the more vehicles using a road, the faster it will deteriorate.



For unpaved roads, heavy use can result in potholes, pronounced ruts, and wash boarding that require more frequent road maintenance including scraping and resurfacing.

There are currently 705.5 miles of unpaved roads in Oconee County, representing 29.2% of the County's total road miles. Oconee County owns and maintains 157.3 miles of these unpaved roads that comprise 23.9% of the road miles owned and maintained by the County. More than 48% of unpaved roads (339 miles) in the County are privately owned and maintained and 24.8% (174.7 miles) are in the Sumter National Forest and maintained by the U.S. Forest Service.

All new roads submitted for acceptance into the County public road system must be paved. Private unpaved roads are allowed in new developments, but must be constructed to County standards and must remain privately maintained.

B. FUNCTIONAL ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Streets and roads serve two primary functions – to provide mobility and facilitate access to land. Optimally, the transportation network balances these two functions. On higher capacity roads such as interstates mobility is the primary function, while the primary function of local roads is to provide residential access. Between these two extremes, the level of mobility and access to land vary depending on the function of the network.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) defines functional classification as the process by which streets and highways are grouped according to the character of service they are intended to provide. Transportation planners and engineers classify roads based on FHWA and State criteria that consider the type of road and traffic volume. Streets and highways are grouped in four categories: freeways, arterials, collectors, and local roads (Table 9-1). The *Functional Classification Map* for Oconee County roads is shown in Map 9-2.

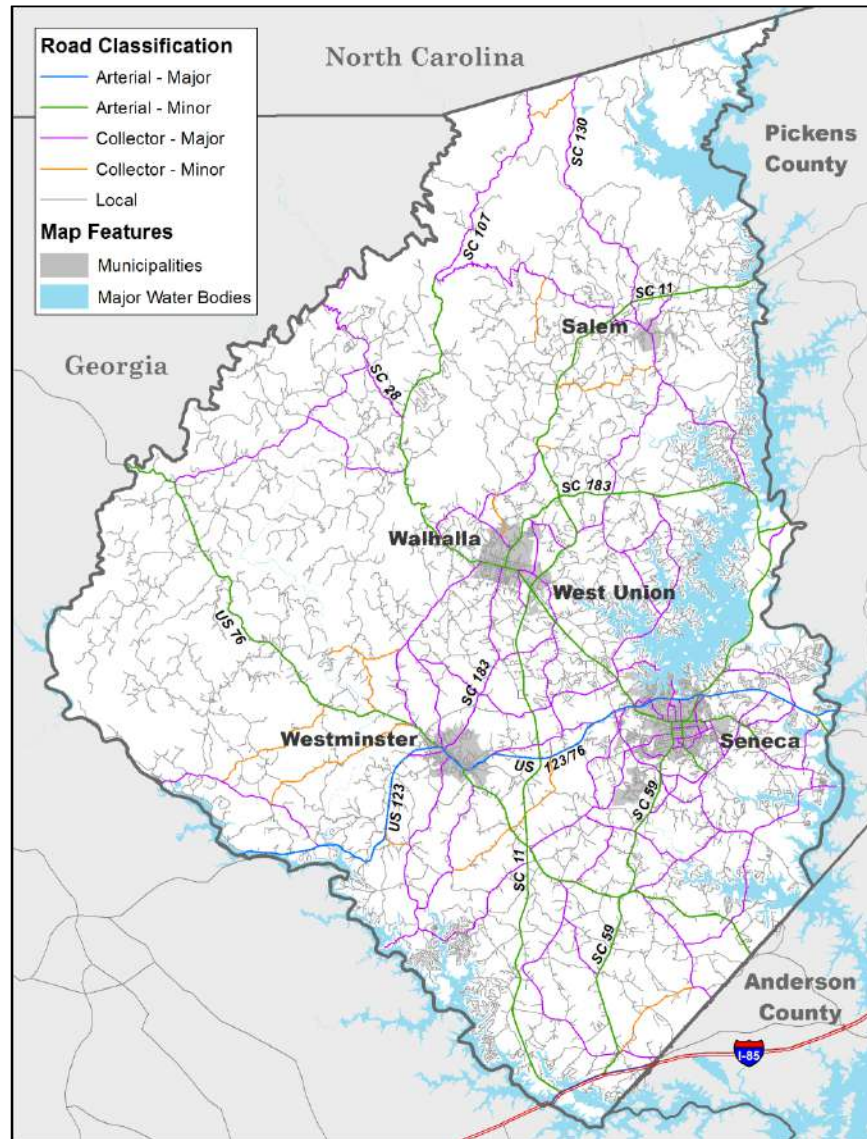
Table 9-1. Functional Road Classifications

Classification	Functional Purpose
Interstates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-lane divided roadways with no traffic signals to interrupt traffic flow
Arterials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the highest level of service at the greatest speed for the longest uninterrupted distance <i>Major arterials</i> are connected networks of continuous routes that serve corridor movements and high percentage of area population <i>Minor arterials</i> form a network linking cities and larger towns as part of an integrated network, including arterials not classified as major and placing emphasis on land access
Collectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide service at a lower speed for shorter distances by collecting traffic from local roads and connecting them with arterials, provides both access and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods, commercial, and industrial areas <i>Major collectors</i> serve the more important travel corridors within a county <i>Minor collectors</i> penetrate neighborhoods, distributing trips from arterial roads and collecting traffic from local streets

Source: Federal Highway Administration, 2019



Map 9-2. Functional Road Classifications, 2018



Source: Oconee County GIS Department, 2018

C. TRAFFIC COUNTS

Recent SCDOT traffic counts for the most traveled road segments in Oconee County are listed in Table 9-2 and illustrated in Map 9-3. The counts represent estimated 24-hour, two-way annual average daily traffic (AADT) and reflect seasonal and daily adjustments. Segments of Interstate 85 are the most traveled routes in the County, with AADT counts that range from 42,600 to 45,500. Traffic counts on segments of U.S. Highway 76 are also comparatively high, ranging from 11,200 to 26,300 on the Highway’s busiest segments. Segments of S.C. Highway 28 also posted high AADTs in 2017.



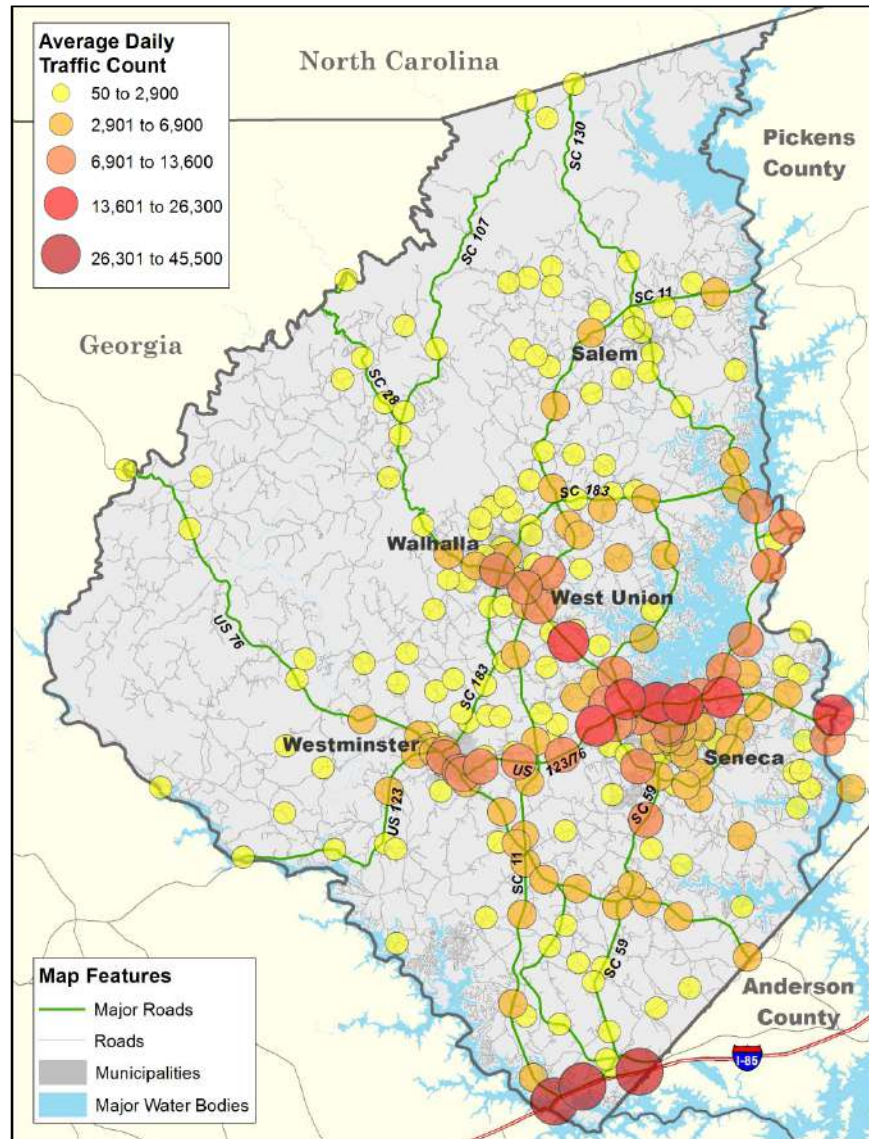
Table 9-2. Oconee County Road Segments with Highest Average Daily Traffic Count (AADT), 2017

Route	Station Number	Route Location	2017 AADT
I- 85	2261	State Line - Georgia to S.C. Hwy.11	45,500
	2263	S.C. Hwy. 11 to S.C. 59 (W. Fairplay Blvd.)	43,800
	2265	S.C. Hwy 59 (W. Fairplay Blvd.) to Old Dobbins Bridge Road (Anderson)	42,600
U.S. Hwy. 76	127	S.C. Hwy. 28 (Blue Ridge Blvd.) to N. Walnut Street	26,300
	129	N. Walnut Street to S.C. Hwy. 130 (Rochester Hwy.)	24,100
	133	Wells Hwy. to Pickens County Line	22,300
	131	S.C. Hwy. 130 (Rochester Hwy.) to Wells Hwy.	19,400
	125	Richland Road to S.C. Hwy. 28 (Blue Ridge Blvd.)	17,600
	123	S.C. Hwy. 11 to Richland Road	12,300
	115	Lucky Street to S.C. Hwy. 24 (West Oak Hwy.)	11,200
S.C. Hwy. 28	153	U.S. Hwy. 76 (U.S. Hwy.123 Bypass) to S.C. Hwy 188 (Keowee School Road)	20,200
	155	S.C. Hwy 188 (Keowee School Rd.) to Poplar Springs Road	16,200
	157	Poplar Springs Road to S.C. Hwy. 11	13,600
	159	S.C. Hwy. 11 to Poplar Springs Road	11,200
Wells Hwy.	389	U.S. Hwy. 76 (Sandifer Blvd.) to W. South 4th Street	12,200
	391	W. South 4 th Street to S.C. Hwy. 59 (S. Oak St.)	10,900
Sheep Farm Rd.	556	Bountyland Road to U.S. Hwy.76 (Sandifer Blvd.)	10,600
S.C. Hwy. 11	118	S.C. Hwy. 28 (Blue Ridge Blvd.) to W. Main Street	10,600
S.C. Hwy. 130	203	U.S. Hwy. 76 (Clemson Blvd.) to Old Clemson Hwy.	10,000
S.C. Hwy. 59	135	Earlestead Drive to U.S. Hwy. 76 (U.S. Hwy.123 Bypass)	10,000

Source: SCDOT, Average Daily Traffic Counts for Oconee County, 2017



Map 9-3. Average Daily Traffic Counts, 2017



Source: SCDOT, Average Daily Traffic Counts for Oconee County, 2017

D. ROADWAY SAFETY

Traffic collisions are responsible for billions of dollars in economic losses in South Carolina each year in the form of property damage, medical costs, and lost productivity. Data compiled by the Office of Highway Safety of the S.C. Department of Public Safety (SCDPS) indicates a traffic collision occurs in the State every 3.7 minutes, with an injury due to a traffic crash occurring every 13.3 minutes. Every 9.5 hours one or more persons die in South Carolina due to injuries sustained in a traffic crash (*S.C. Traffic Collision Fact Book, 2017*).



There are 78,981 registered vehicles in Oconee County (*S.C. Traffic Collision Fact Book, 2017*). Among South Carolina's 46 counties, Oconee County ranked 24th highest in number of traffic collisions. The County ranked 25th highest in collisions resulting in injury and 21st highest in fatalities caused by traffic accidents in 2017. While only 1.4% of crashes resulted in fatalities, injuries were reported in more than one-third (37.5%) of collisions in the County.

There were 19 deaths as a result of traffic collisions in the County in 2017 – nine on State primary roads, five on secondary roads, three on U.S. primary roads and one each on I-85 and a county road (Table 9-3). Collisions were prevalent on S.C. primary roads and secondary roads in Oconee County, with a high number also reported on U.S. primary roads. Higher percentages indicate that collisions are more likely to occur on state primary roads in Oconee County than on such roads statewide.

Table 9-3. Collisions by Route Type, 2017

Road Type	Collision Type						Persons	
	Fatal		Injury		Total Collisions*		Killed	Injured
	#	%	#	#	%	#		
Oconee County								
Interstate	1	5.9%	4	1.2%	36	2.6%	1	6
U.S. Primary	3	17.6%	79	22.8%	321	23.5%	3	133
S.C. Primary	7	41.2%	108	31.2%	451	33.0%	9	151
Secondary	5	29.4%	134	38.7%	458	33.5%	5	188
County	1	5.9%	21	6.1%	97	7.1%	1	34
Ramp	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	0.0%	0	0
Totals	17	100.0%	346	100.0%	1,366	99.8%	19	512
South Carolina								
Interstate	96	10.4%	3,533	9.0%	16,428	11.6%	104	5,454
U.S. Primary	258	27.9%	11,071	28.1%	37,465	26.4%	277	17,713
S.C. Primary	233	25.2%	9,324	23.6%	31,910	22.5%	257	14,544
Secondary	292	31.6%	12,569	31.8%	42,850	30.2%	304	18,743
County	45	4.9%	2,865	7.3%	12,627	8.9%	46	3,974
Ramp	1	0.1%	104	0.3%	594	0.4%	1	138
Totals	925	100.0%	39,466	100.0%	141,874	100.0%	989	60,566

* Property Damage Only collisions are included in totals but are not listed separately
 Source: S.C. Department of Public Safety, *South Carolina Traffic Collision Fact Book, 2017*

In 2018, the Oconee County Community Development Department prepared a *Roadway Collision and Fatality Research* report for the Oconee County Planning Commission that provides a statistical baseline. The report examines collision data from 2012 through 2017 and provides additional information that can be used in corridor planning, while examining approaches for mitigation of the causes of collisions such as driving too fast for conditions and driving under the influence. The companion report *County Wide Citation Data 2013-2017, Highway 76/123 Traffic Data 2006-2016* released in 2018 provides average annual daily trips and citation information



including top routes, days and times of issuance, and ticketed offences related to leading collision causes.

E. COMMUTING PATTERNS

More than 71% of Oconee County workers aged 16 and over both live and work in the County, while nearly one-in-four commute outside of the County to work (Table 9-4). Among those that live in a town or city, only 4.1% or 1,137 workers, also work in the same town or city – a much lower percentage than statewide and nationwide at 16.2% and 31.5%, respectively.

Mean travel time to work for Oconee County workers is 24.7 minutes, similar to the commute time for workers statewide at 24.1 minutes, but slightly lower than commuters throughout the nation at 26.1 minutes (Table 9-4). Nearly one-third (31.1%) of Oconee County workers have a commute time of less than 15 minutes to work – a higher percentage than workers throughout South Carolina and the United States. Eight percent of County workers drive an hour or more to work.

Table 9-4. Journey to Work, 2016

Workers 16 and Older	Oconee County	South Carolina	United States
Place of Work			
Worked in Town or City of Residence	4.1%	16.2%	31.5%
Worked in County of Residence	71.1%	70.6%	72.4%
Worked Outside County of Residence	24.5%	24.1%	23.9%
Worked Outside State of Residence	4.4%	5.3%	3.7%
Means of Transport to Work			
Car, Truck or Van – Drove Alone	84.2%	82.8%	76.4%
Car, Truck or Van – Carpooled	10.0%	9.3%	9.3%
Public Transportation	0.7%	0.6%	5.1%
Walked	0.8%	2.2%	2.8%
Bicycle	0.0%	0.3%	0.6%
Other Means - Taxi, Motorcycle, etc.	1.0%	1.2%	1.2%
Worked at Home	3.3%	3.6%	4.6%
Travel Time to Work			
14 minutes or less	31.1%	27.3%	26.7%
15 - 29 minutes	39.0%	39.5%	36.3%
30 to 59 minutes	21.6%	27.5%	28.4%
60 or more minutes	8.1%	5.6%	8.7%
Mean Travel Time to Work (minutes)	24.7	24.1	26.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey

Personal vehicles are the primary travel mode for most Oconee County residents. Only 1.5% of County workers bike, walk, or travel to work on public transportation. Among workers living in Oconee County, 84.2% drive solo to work, while 10% participate in carpools. Only 3.3% of County



workforce works at home, which is slightly lower than the statewide percentage of 3.6% and the national rate of 4.6%.

Geographic data on worker commuting patterns is provided in Table 9-5. Of the 7,870 Oconee County residents who travel outside the County for work, more than 45% commute to Pickens County employers, followed by workers commuting to Anderson (22.9%) and Greenville Counties (13.1%). These outgoing commuters offer a potential labor pool for new and expanding industries and businesses as additional or better job opportunities are created closer to home.

Nearly 6,580 workers from surrounding counties and nearby states travel to employers in Oconee County. Pickens County residents lead the influx of in-commuters at 42.4%, followed closely by workers from Anderson County at 31.3%. Table 9-5 lists the top counties of origin for workers commuting into Oconee County, as well as the destination of local commuters.

Table 9-5. Top 10 Counties - Workers Commuting into/from Oconee County

Top 10 - Commuters into County		Top 10 - Commuters out of County	
County of Residence	Commuters	County of Employment	Commuters
Pickens County, SC	2,786	Pickens County, SC	3,553
Anderson County, SC	2,061	Anderson County, SC	1,802
Greenville County, SC	491	Greenville County, SC	1,034
Stephens County, GA	183	Stephens County, GA	213
Spartanburg County, SC	101	Jackson County, NC	168
Franklin County, GA	84	Spartanburg County, SC	137
Jasper County, SC	74	Fulton County, GA	77
Abbeville County, SC	73	Rutherford County, NC	67
Hart County, GA	64	Bartholomew County, IN	61
Tarrant County, TX	58	Cobb County, GA	59
Total all commuting into County	6,578	Total all commuting out of County	7,870

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey

F. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Planning for transportation projects in Oconee County is undertaken at the State, regional, and local levels. Likewise, much of the funding for transportation projects is requested by local governments, reviewed and prioritized through the regional councils of governments, included in the State Transportation Improvement Program, and ultimately provided through Federal transportation programs. Administration of major transportation projects utilizing federal funds is provided by the individual regional Councils of Governments such as the Appalachian Council of Governments that includes Oconee County.

Funding for transportation projects is also provided by the State through the “C Fund” program. Locally, Oconee County utilizes “C Funds,” along with additional funds provided through sources including the County’s Road Maintenance Fee and Bridges and Culverts Fund, to construct and



pave roads, make road improvements, maintain roads and bridges, and address related transportation needs. These programs and funding sources are explained in greater detail in the sections below and in the Priority Investment Element.

1. Statewide Transportation Planning

The South Carolina *Department of Transportation Reform Bill (Act 114)* is intended to encourage sound infrastructure investment decisions made within the context of the statewide planning process. Specifically, *Act 114* requires SCDOT to establish a priority list of projects to be undertaken through the *Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)* and in consultation with metropolitan planning organizations using the following criteria:

- 1) Financial viability including a life-cycle analysis of estimated maintenance and repair costs over the expected life of the project;
- 2) Public safety;
- 3) Potential for economic development;
- 4) Traffic volume and congestion;
- 5) Truck traffic;
- 6) Pavement quality index;
- 7) Environmental impact;
- 8) Alternative transportation solutions; and
- 9) Consistency with local land use plans.

The 2017–2022 STIP is the State’s six-year transportation improvement plan for all projects and program areas that receive federal funding, including paving, bridges, upgrades, freight, safety, congestion mitigation, air quality, transportation alternatives, railroad crossings, planning, State Infrastructure Bank payments, preventative maintenance and operations, and public transportation. The STIP only includes projects for which there is committed funding available.

Planning for sound infrastructure is also a primary goal of the *South Carolina Priority Investment Act of 2007*. The *Priority Investment Act* amends *Section 6-29-1130* of the *South Carolina Code of Laws* and requires that local government comprehensive plans include a separate Transportation Element. The Act requires that the Transportation Element be developed in coordination with the Land Use element to ensure transportation efficiency for existing and planned development. The Act also requires comprehensive plans to include a Priority Investment Element, which must include an analysis of likely Federal, State and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities, including transportation systems. The Priority Investment Element must also recommend projects for expenditure of these funds over the next ten years, with recommendations coordinated with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies.

2. Regional Transportation Planning

Transportation planning for Oconee County is provided by the *Appalachian Council of Governments* (ACOG). ACOG is responsible for conducting the rural transportation planning process for its six-county region in partnership with SCDOT. The primary responsibilities of all designated transportation planning agencies are to:

- 1) Develop a *Rural Long Range Transportation Plan* (Rural LRTP), which is, at a minimum, a 25-year transportation vision for the metropolitan area;
- 2) Develop a *Rural Transportation Improvement Program* (RTIP), which is the agreed-upon list of specific projects for which federal funds are anticipated; and
- 3) Develop a *Rural Planning Work Program* (RPWP), which identifies, in a single document, the annual transportation planning activities that are to be undertaken in support of the goals, objectives, and actions established in the LRTP.

Input on transportation projects is provided through the ACOG public participation plan and by the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC), which includes a representative from each county represented by ACOG, including Oconee County. The committee meets quarterly or as needed to review project status, evaluate proposed modifications to the STIP, update the long-range plan and funding priorities, comment on rural functional classification changes, receive input on the rural work programs, and coordinate special studies. The RTAC forwards recommendations for program changes and project prioritization to the Policy Committee (ACOG Board of Directors), which includes six representatives from Oconee County, for final approval.

a. ACOG Rural Long Range Transportation Plan 2040

The Rural LRTP defines the regional goals for transportation, establishes existing and future transportation needs, and allocates projected revenue to transportation programs and projects that address these needs. The ACOG *Rural Long Range Transportation Plan 2040*, adopted in 2016, identifies a number of transportation improvement projects in Oconee County. Five intersection improvement projects are considered “fiscally constrained” with funding dependent on Guideshare program allocations. The regional Rural LRTP also lists potential projects in Oconee County for which funding has not been identified. Included are six intersection improvement projects, three access management projects, four bridge improvement projects, eight road segments where the condition of the pavement is rated as “poor” and are in need of improvement, and two priority traffic signalization projects.

b. ACOG 2017-2022 Rural Transportation Improvement Program

The 2017-2022 *Rural Transportation Improvement Program* (RTIP) for the ACOG region is a six-year program of transportation capital projects that includes a seven-year estimate of transit capital and maintenance requirements. While the RTIP is updated as needed, and biennially at a minimum, amendments must go through a rigorous review by ACOG staff, the RTAC, and the



public. The RTIP must be financially constrained, meaning that the amount of funding programmed must not exceed the amount of available estimated funding. Specifically, the RTIP identifies transportation improvement projects recommended for advancement during the program years that receive Federal Highway Administration or Federal Transit Administration funds and identifies the criteria and process for prioritization of projects in the RTIP and any changes from past RTIPs. The RTIP also creates an implementation timeline for projects and includes realistic estimates of total costs and revenue for the program period.

The projects proposed by the RTIP for each Council of Government (COG) or Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) are evaluated and incorporated into the Statewide TIP by the SCDOT Commission. The 2017-2022 RTIP for the Appalachian COG region was adopted in June 2016. Oconee County projects included in the RTIP, including regional prioritization, are listed in Table 9-6. The funding source for all of these projects is the Federal Surface Transportation Block Grant program, with funding allocated by the SCDOT through the Guideshare program.

Table 9-6. ACOG 2017-2022 Rural TIP Oconee County Guideshare Projects

Priority	Project Description	Budgeted Funds
<i>Intersection Improvements</i>		
1	U.S. Hwy. 123 (Clemson Blvd.) @ Davis Creek Road	▪ \$300,000 in FY 2017 for planning, \$250,000 in FY 2018 for ROW acquisition, \$1 million in FY 2019 for construction
6	S.C. 24 (West Oak Hwy.) @ S.C. Hwy. 182 (Oakway Road)/Oak Creek Road	▪ \$500,000 in FY 2018 for planning, \$350,000 in FY 2020 for ROW acquisition, \$1.8 million in FY 2021 for construction
8	S.C. Hwy. 59 @ S.C. Hwy. 182/S.C. 243	▪ \$1 million in FY 2019 for planning, \$1 million in FY 2021 for ROW acquisition, \$2.5 million in FY 2022 for construction
9	JP Stevens Road @ W. Cherry Road JP Stevens Road @ Martin Creek Road	▪ \$500,000 in FY 2020 for planning, \$250,000 in 2022 for ROW acquisition

Source: ACOG 2017-2022 Rural Transportation Improvement Program, 2019

c. ACOG 2020-2021 Rural Planning Work Program

The *Rural Planning Work Program* (RPWP) identifies work program tasks and presents budget allocations for planning activities to be undertaken in the rural areas of the ACOG region. Tasks identified in the RPWP include administration and planning for transportation projects in the rural portions of the region, coordination of human service transit activities, and coordination of projects with other regional transportation partners. The RPWP is updated annually and documents major transportation planning and related activities for the coming two fiscal years. The most recent RPWP for the Appalachian COG region was adopted in March 2019. The total two-year budget for the 2020-2021 RWTP is \$212,500, of which \$170,000 is expected to be provided by the SCDOT and \$42,500 by local match funding.



3. State and Local Transportation Funding

The State of South Carolina's "C Program" is a partnership between SCDOT and the State's counties to fund location transportation projects and improvements to State, county, and city roads. Program funds, known as C-Funds, are derived from a 2.9925 cents per gallon user tax on gasoline sales. The tax is allocated to each of the 46 counties based on population, land area, and rural road mileage. The allocation per gallon will increase by 0.3325 cent per gallon each fiscal year through 2021, when it will reach a total of 3.99 cents per gallon. As part of the program, each county has a *County Transportation Committee (CTC)* with members appointed by the county legislative delegation. The three-member Oconee County Transportation Committee is responsible for the formation of a county transportation plan, and is empowered with the authority to select and approve projects to be funded utilizing C-Funds.

C-Funds may be used for construction, improvements, or maintenance on the State highway system; local paving or improvements to county roads; street and traffic signs; and other road and bridge projects. Resurfacing, sidewalk construction, and drainage improvements may also be paid for with C-Funds. By law, counties must spend at least 25 percent of C-Fund allocations on construction, improvements, and maintenance related to the state highway system, with the remaining 75% available for local transportation system projects. The FY 2018-2019 C-Fund apportionment for Oconee County was \$1,951,600 (*SCDOT, 2019*). The County may request C-Funds based on the annual apportionment amount, however the amount requested by Oconee County has generally been less than \$600,000

Oconee County residents are also assessed a tax millage of 2.1 for Road Maintenance and 1.0 for Bridges and Culverts maintenance (*Oconee County 2018-2019 Budget Document*). Revenue budgeted in FY 2018-2019 totaled \$1,171,920 from Road Maintenance and \$530,000 for Bridges and Culverts. Road Maintenance funds are primarily used for road paving, maintenance, and repair, while Bridges and Culverts funds are used to replace and repair the County's bridges and culverts.

Additional funding for transportation projects is also provided from other sources including grants. Oconee County receives grant funding from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) for transportation improvements. *National Forestry Title I* funding is provided to counties with National Forest lands, with allocation based on gross receipts from all sources such as timber and special permits. The County received \$220,000 in FY 2019 from the National Forestry Title I grant.

4. Road Projects Funding Summary

A summary of allocated and anticipated funding from federal, state, and local sources for transportation projects is outlined in Table 9-7 and is based on recent funding levels.



Table 9-7. Funding Summary for Oconee County Transportation Projects

Funding Source	Projects Funded	Allocated/Anticipated Annual Funding
<i>Oconee County</i> - General Fund	Study and address land use, transportation, and development issues such as transportation corridor studies	\$89,000 ¹
<i>Oconee County</i> - Special Revenue Fund, Road Maintenance Fee	Road Maintenance – road paving, maintenance, and repair	\$1,171,920 ²
<i>State</i> - C-Funds	Improvements to state and local roads and bridges, resurfacing, and other transportation projects. Requested C-Funds are placed in the County’s Special Revenue Fund	\$1,951,600 ³ (allocation, available on as needed basis)
<i>Oconee County</i> - Capital Projects Funds	Economic Development Capital Projects Fund (transportation projects related to Economic Development) Bridge and Culvert Fund – repair and replace	\$769,000 ² \$530,000 ²
<i>Oconee County</i> – Grants	U.S. Forest Service – National Forestry Title I funding	\$220,000 ²
ACOG – Rural Transportation Improvement Program	Capital transportation projects for federally funded transportation facilities and transit projects	\$2 million FY 2019 ⁴ \$850,00 FY 2020 ⁴ \$1.8 million FY 2021 ⁴ \$2.75 million FY 2022 ⁴

Sources: ¹*Oconee County 2019 Strategic Plan Report*; ²*Oconee County, SC 2018-2019 Budget Document*;

³*SCDOT, S.C. Secondary “C” Program Apportionment of Funds for FY 2018-19*;

⁴*ACOG, 2017-2022 Rural Transportation Improvement Plan, June 2016*

G. TRANSPORTATION FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Securing funding for needed transportation improvements is a top priority for South Carolina communities. Communities must seek alternative funding resources for much needed transportation projects including road maintenance, paving, bridge repair, transit, sidewalks, greenbelts, connecting trails, and traffic mitigation. The following sections discuss options available to local governments in the Palmetto State.

1. SCDOT Transportation Alternative Program

Oconee County and its municipalities are eligible for transportation enhancement funding under the *Transportation Alternative Program* (TAP), formerly known as the Transportation Enhancement Project Program, administered by SCDOT. TAP projects are federally-funded, community-based projects that provide opportunities for local governments to pursue non-traditional transportation related activities such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities and pedestrian streetscaping projects that might not otherwise be possible.



The TAP grant program provides funding on a reimbursement basis as part of the Federal-aid Highway Program funded through the FAST initiative. Costs are eligible for reimbursement only after a project has been approved by the State Department of Transportation or a Metropolitan Planning Organization and the FHWA division office. Eligible project areas authorized in FAST for the Transportation Alternatives Program and the SCDOT Commission include pedestrian and bicycle facilities and streetscaping projects. Eligible costs include preliminary and final engineering work such as project development, environmental work, cost estimates, construction plans, utility relocations, construction engineering, construction costs, and right-of-way acquisition. TAP funds generally account for 80% of the total project cost, with local governments required to provide a 20% match.

Available SCDOT program funding is provided in two population-based divisions. Urbanized areas with a population of more than 200,000, also known as a Transportation Management Area (TMA), are eligible to compete for a share of more than \$2.9 million designated for urbanized areas of the State. Areas of the State with a population greater than 5,000 other than urban areas have a designated funding pool of more than \$1.8 million. The SCDOT has also designated \$2.6 million for areas with a population of less than 5,000. Oconee County and the City of Seneca, with populations of 73,375 and 8,228, respectively, are currently eligible in the second category, while the County's other municipalities are eligible under the third category.

Projects proposed by governmental bodies located in areas outside of Transportation Management Areas, such as Oconee County and its municipalities, are considered under the statewide program, with distribution of funds determined by the SCDOT Commission. Such projects are limited to a maximum of \$400,000.

2. One Percent (Penny) Sales Tax

A number of South Carolina counties have implemented a one percent sales tax to address capital projects and transportation needs in recent years. Voters in other counties have rejected one percent tax plans, including in Oconee County where voters most recently rejected a proposed one percent sales tax in 2014.

Section 4-37-30 of the South Carolina Code of Laws empowers counties to levy, by ordinance, a special sales and use tax as a source of revenue for highways, roads, streets, bridges, mass transit systems, greenbelts, and other transportation-related facilities including, but not limited to, drainage relating to highways, roads, streets, bridges, and other transportation-related projects. The one percent tax equates to an additional penny on every dollar spent. The public must approve the tax through a referendum. The key advantage to such a tax is that out-of-county workers and residents and tourists who shop in the receiving county also contribute to the tax revenues through their purchases, helping to offset the costs of roads and other facilities.

Under the legislation, counties that implement a one cent sales tax must share the proceeds with their municipalities using a formula based on population and must specify a period of time to



collect a set amount of money for the identified projects (not to exceed 25 years or the length of payment for the specified projects). Implementing counties must appoint a commission to consider proposals for funding capital projects and formulate the referendum question for public vote. In addition to funding transportation facilities, revenue from the one cent tax may also be used for civic, educational, and cultural facilities; water and sewer projects; flood control and storm water projects; and dredging, dewatering, and constructing spoil sites.

3. Exactions

An exaction is a form of land use regulation that requires a developer to donate something for the public good in exchange for the right to develop property. By sharing the cost with new residents, exactions aid in protecting the community from the costs of providing additional infrastructure associated with growth. Exactions provide a way for jurisdictions to pass a portion of the cost of public facilities on to a developer at the time the development begins, rather than later through the collection of tax revenues or service charges from new residents. Exactions are formal cost-sharing agreements between the developer and the local government to fund the additional community infrastructure needed to serve the new development.

Several types of exactions may be used by local governments for transportation facilities. A **dedication** requires that a developer donate land or facilities for public use. For example, a developer may be required to dedicate land for use as a trail or greenway for the residents of the development and connection to existing or future facilities outside of the development. A **fee-in-lieu** requires the developer to pay a fee instead of providing a public facility on-site. For example, the developer can choose to pay a fee rather than dedicate land for an on-site greenway or trail. This type of exaction provides greater flexibility to local governments to place facilities where they are most needed and appropriate. **Impact fees** are scheduled charges applied to new development to generate revenue for the construction or expansion of capital facilities located off-site of the new development, but that benefit the contributing development.

The *1999 South Carolina Development Impact Fee Act (SC Code § 6-1-910, et seq.)* allows counties and municipalities to impose by ordinance a requirement for payment of development impact fees by a land developer as a condition of development approval. The Act defines a development impact fee as “a payment of money imposed as a condition of development to pay for a proportionate share of the cost of system improvements needed to serve the people utilizing the improvements.” System improvements are capital improvements to public facilities which are designed to provide service to a defined service area. Public facilities include water, wastewater, solid waste and stormwater services, roads, public safety, street lighting, capital equipment, and parks and recreation. Impact fee amounts must be based on actual improvement costs or reasonable estimates of the costs. The process for adopting an impact fee ordinance begins with a resolution by council that directs the planning commission to conduct the necessary studies and recommend an ordinance developed in accordance with the *Impact Fee Act*. The Act requires detailed calculations to determine impact fees, maximum impact fees, and the developer’s proportionate share.



In 1989, Oconee County adopted a *Sewer Impact Fee* for all users of the wastewater treatment facility and industries specifically permitted to discharge wastewater into the wastewater treatment system. The purpose of the fee is to “obtain revenue for the future renovation, modernization and expansion of the existing wastewater treatment plant and the construction of any new plant.” Per the County’s Ordinance, the impact fee is an initial charge based on the “permitted or projected volume of wastewater discharge or contribution to the system.” Wastewater impact fees are also in place for several of the County’s municipalities.

Several court cases have provided guidance in establishing exactions that are reasonable and defensible. First, there must be an “essential nexus,” or reasonable connection, between the infrastructure need and the new development (*Nollan v. California Coastal Commission, 1987*). Essential nexus extends to the establishment of a reasonable connection between the expenditure of the fee collected and the benefits received by the development. Second, there must be a “rough proportionality” in both the nature and extent of the exaction and the impact of the proposed development (*Dolan v. Tigard, 2005*).

H. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Affordable and reliable transportation is a necessity for all residents. However, the lower incomes and limited mobility experienced by many special needs populations can magnify the importance of affordable and reliable transit options to maintain employment, receive support services, and access health care and other needed support programs.

Public transit is provided in a number of ways in South Carolina communities. ***Fixed-route transit service*** uses passenger vehicles operating on fixed routes and schedules. ***Route deviation services*** operate as conventional fixed-route bus services that allow buses to deviate from the route alignment to serve destinations within a prescribed distance of the route. Passengers use the service by calling to request a pickup, or by telling the bus operator if they need to be taken off-route. A ***demand response service*** is a transit mode that includes passenger cars, vans, or small buses that operate in response to calls from passengers or their agents to the transit operator, who dispatches a vehicle to pick up the passengers and transport them to their destinations. The vehicles generally do not operate over a fixed-route or on a fixed schedule and may be dispatched to pick up several passengers at different pick-up points before taking them to their respective destinations.

1. Clemson Area Transit

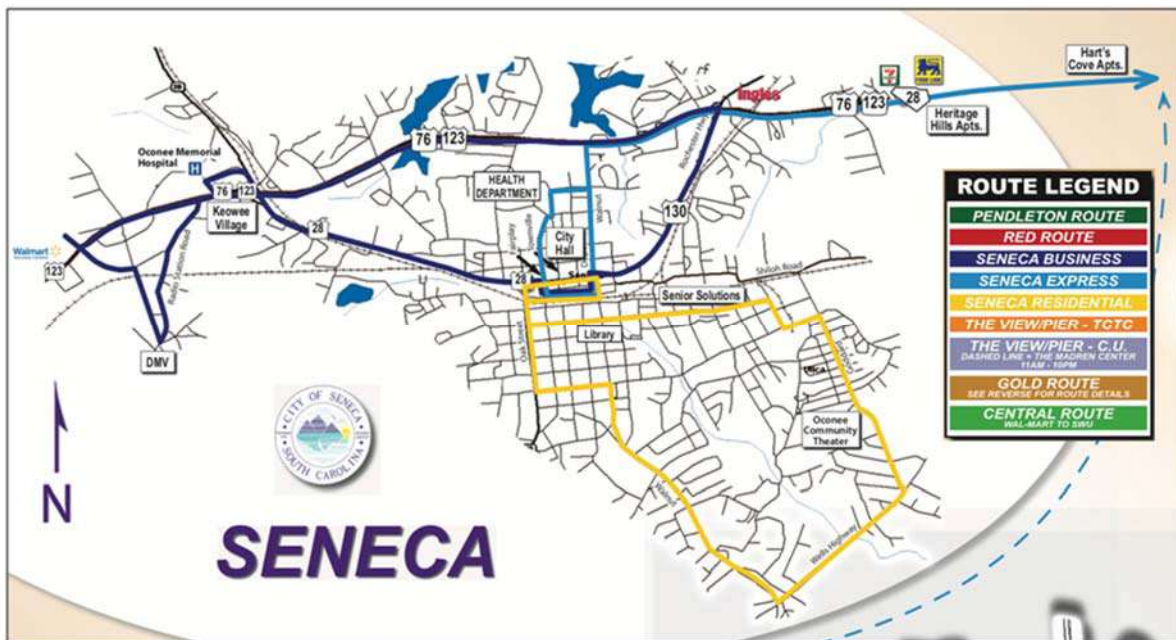
Clemson Area Transit (CAT) provides public transportation in Oconee County. The fare-free service is provided by Clemson University, the City of Clemson, the Town of Central, the Town of Pendleton, the City of Seneca, SCDOT, and the Federal Transit Administration (*Clemson Area Transit, 2019*). The ***CATbus*** system includes three routes that provide service along U.S. Highway 123 to destinations in the City of Seneca (Map 9-4). The ***Seneca Business*** and ***Residential*** routes operate Monday through Friday from 6:20 a.m. to 6:20 p.m. and the ***Seneca Express*** runs Monday



through Friday from 5:45 a.m. to 6:25 p.m. In addition to the Seneca routes, the CAT system provides service to destinations in the City of Clemson, Clemson University, Tri-County Technical College, Southern Wesleyan University, the Towns of Central and Pendleton, and Anderson County.

CATbus service in Oconee County is provided through an intergovernmental agreement between the Cities of Clemson and Seneca. Similar agreements are also in place between Clemson and Tri-County Technical College, Southern Wesleyan University, and the Towns of Central and Pendleton.

Map 9-4. CAT Bus Routes in Oconee County



Source: Clemson Area Transit, 2019

CAT operates an all-electric bus fleet, including four zero-emission transit buses and charging stations at Norton Thompson Park and at Oconee Memorial Hospital that serve the Seneca area. The City of Seneca was recently awarded a \$1.45 million *Low or No Emission Bus Program* grant from the Federal Transit Administration to purchase two additional electric buses that will enable expansion of bus service in Oconee County. Discussions are underway on new or expanded routes to be served by these new buses.

All CAT buses are equipped to accommodate persons with disabilities. The system also operates a fixed-route deviation service within three-quarters of a mile of its fixed-routes with curb-to-curb service for persons with disabilities. Requests for this service must be made 24 hours in advance.



2. Senior Solutions

Senior Solutions provides transportation options for Oconee County seniors and their spouses under age 60 and for dependents with disabilities. Pick-up and delivery services are available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to non-emergency medical appointments, the Oconee Senior Center, and daily errands such as trips to the grocery store and pharmacy. Handicap-accessible vehicles are available as needed. Reservations for Senior Solutions transportation services must be made three days in advance by calling the agency's Oconee County Transportation Office.

I. BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN

Well-designed systems of walkways and trails can provide residents with safe, inexpensive transportation alternatives to access jobs, education, and services. Alternative modes of travel can also help to improve air quality and reduce energy use. According to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey, 246 Oconee County residents reported walking to work and 299 reported traveling to work by taxi, motorcycle, bicycle, or other means.

Information provided by SCDHEC lists multiple benefits of cycling or walking to destinations. In addition to reduced (or no) transportation cost, health benefits include a reduced risk of cancer, diabetes, stroke, and heart attack, along with weight loss and control (*Benefits of Alternative Transportation, 2010*). The sedentary lifestyle of Americans is largely attributed to the fact that "walking and cycling have been replaced by automobile travel for all but the shortest distances" (*Journal of the American Medical Association, October 1999*).

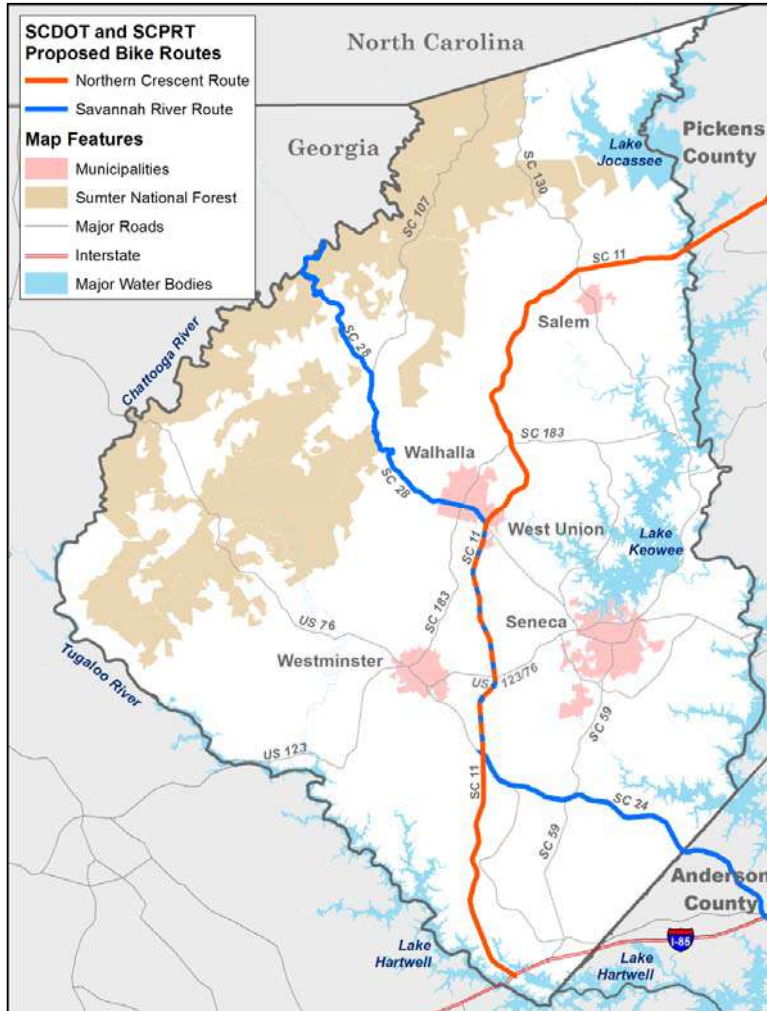
As detailed in the Natural Resources Element, there are nearly 193 miles of trails in Oconee County. Most of these trails provide access to parks or natural resources such as water bodies or scenic views or opportunities for hiking or mountain biking. However, very few outside of the County's municipalities provide linkages between residential areas and destinations such as work, shopping, entertainment, recreation, or other residential areas. Dedicated bike lanes are also very limited in the County, with cyclists generally competing with motorized vehicles when traveling public roads. However, there is an increasing interest in providing travel options in Oconee County. The Oconee County *Highway 123 Corridor Study and Plan* currently under development will include pedestrian and bicycle connections to adjacent and regional amenities and services with features such as sidewalks, street furniture, lighting, and cross walks intended to make the corridor a more friendly, safe, and inviting environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

The S.C. Departments of Transportation and Parks, Recreation and Tourism have jointly proposed two bicycle touring routes through Oconee County (Map 9-5). However, these routes are not currently designed for bicycle touring and may not include bike lanes. In Oconee County, the *Savannah River Route* follows S.C. Highway 28 from the northern Georgia border through Mountain Rest to Walhalla, then south along S.C. Highway 11 to I-85. The entire 286-mile route generally parallels the course of the Savannah River from the foothills of the Blue Ridge



Mountains to the coastal community of Beaufort. The Northern Crescent Route begins at the Pickens County border and follows S.C. Highway 11 west through the Salem and Tamassee areas, then south to West Union before heading east on S.C. Highway 24 to I-85. The entire 360-mile route runs just south of the North Carolina border to the City of North Myrtle Beach.

Map 9-5. SCDOT and SCPRT Proposed Bicycle Routes in Oconee County



Source: SCDOT, 2019

J. AIRPORTS

Aviation services for Oconee County and the surrounding area are available at the *Oconee County Regional Airport* (CEU) on Airport Road in Seneca (Map 9-6). The Airport is owned and operated by Oconee County. CEU has a 5,000 feet by 100 feet paved runway with a precision GPS instrument approach and a non-precision GPS instrument approach. The Airport is home to 75 aircraft, with the ability to host up to 75 transient aircraft with ramp and tie-down spaces. It is home to the Clemson University Flight Department and Clemson Flying Club and is popular with hobby flyers, Clemson football fans flying in for games, and with corporate executives traveling



to nearby facilities. Available services include aircraft maintenance, rental car services, fueling services, pilot lounge, WIFI, full kitchen, conference room, and weather and flight planning room. The **Greenville-Spartanburg Airport** (GSP) is located approximately 60 miles and an hour west of Seneca and Walhalla. GSP serves more than 2.3 million passengers and ships 60,000 tons of cargo annually through six major passenger carriers and numerous freight carriers (*Greenville-Spartanburg Airport, 2019*). GSP offers an average of 50 non-stop flights to 19 destinations and is the site of a 120,000 square foot FedEx facility. Air operations are conducted on an 11,001 feet x 150 feet runway. The GSP terminal has 322,446 square feet of space, including third level jet bridge boarding and 13 departure gates. Listed as one of the nation's top 100 commercial service airports, GSP continues to expand to meet growing demand. Recent expansion and renovation of the terminal increased capacity to 4 million passengers per year and completion of a new cargo terminal is expected in mid-2019 (*Upstate Business Journal, 2019*).

The **Hartsville-Jackson Atlanta International Airport** (ATL) is approximately 124 miles and a two hour drive from Seneca and Walhalla. ATL is the busiest and most efficient airport in the world, offering nonstop service to more than 150 domestic and 75 international destinations. The terminal complex is more than 6.8 million square feet in size, with seven concourses that include 152 domestic and 40 international gates. Air operations are conducted on five runways with lengths that range from 9,000 feet to 12,390 feet. The Airport is a primary hub for Delta Air Lines and a focus location for many other carriers, serving an average of 275,000 passengers daily. ATL is also a major cargo hub, with three cargo complexes with total space equaling 1.3 million square feet and an adjoining Foreign Trade Zone to reduce operating costs associated with international trade.

K. RAIL AND SHIPPING

In today's global economy, commercial transportation is critical to a region's potential for business and industrial development. Time sensitive transportation services are increasingly important to gaining a competitive advantage in manufacturing and service-based industries. Transportation options for the mass transport of passengers are also growing in importance, as travelers seek alternatives to individual automobile travel, whether for short commutes or long trips. Convenient and efficient connectivity to areas nationwide and overseas is attractive to businesses and industries. This option is an incentive for economic development and also contributes to the quality of life for area residents.

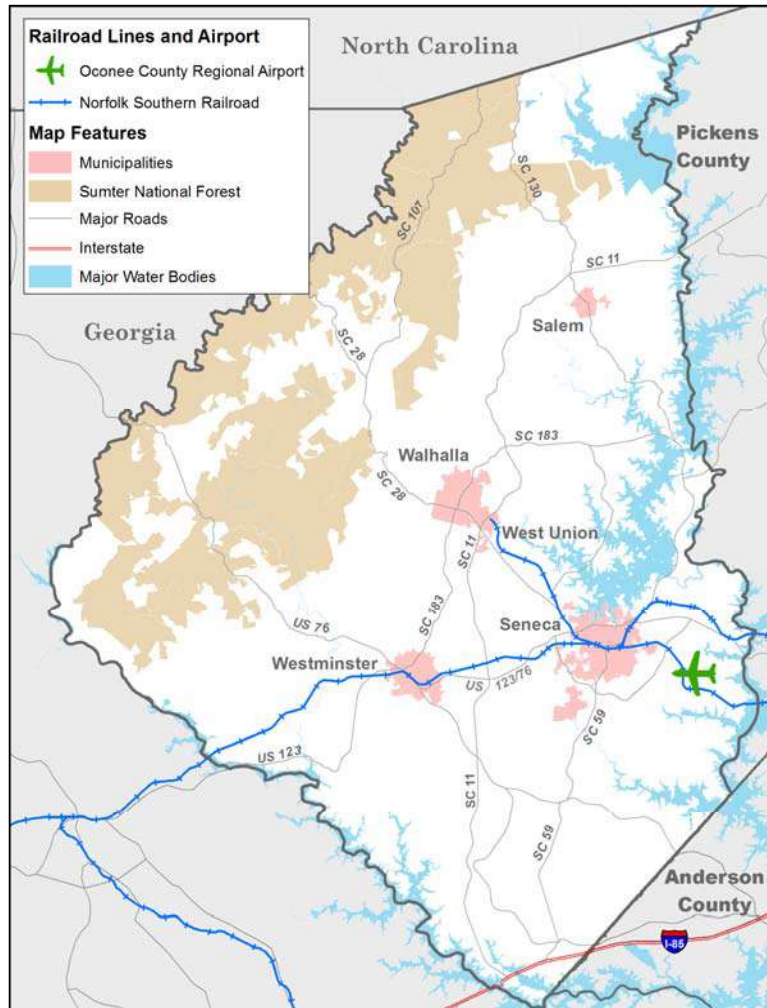
1. Railroads

The **Norfolk Southern Railway** provides freight rail service in Oconee County. As shown in Map 9-6, the Norfolk Southern rail line bisects the County from east to west, traveling through Westminster and Seneca, with a spur also running north to Walhalla. Norfolk Southern is the second largest carrier in South Carolina, with 679 miles of rail that account for 30% of the State's rail system (*S.C. Statewide Rail Plan, 2014*). The railroad operates a total of 21,500 route miles in 22 states, connecting Oconee County to Greenville, Columbia, Greer, Spartanburg, and



Charleston in South Carolina; Augusta and Atlanta in Georgia; and Charlotte, North Carolina and beyond. Access to Amtrak passenger rail service is available nearby in the City of Clemson.

Map 9-6. Railroad Lines and Airport



Source: SCDOT, 2019

Railroad safety is an important issue in transportation planning. There have been only two railway accidents reported in Oconee County in the past decade (*FRA Office of Safety, 2019*). In 2016, a freight train struck a vehicle at a crossing near Seneca, with no injuries reported. An Amtrak passenger train struck a large tree near Seneca in 2017, with no injuries reported.

a. High Speed Rail

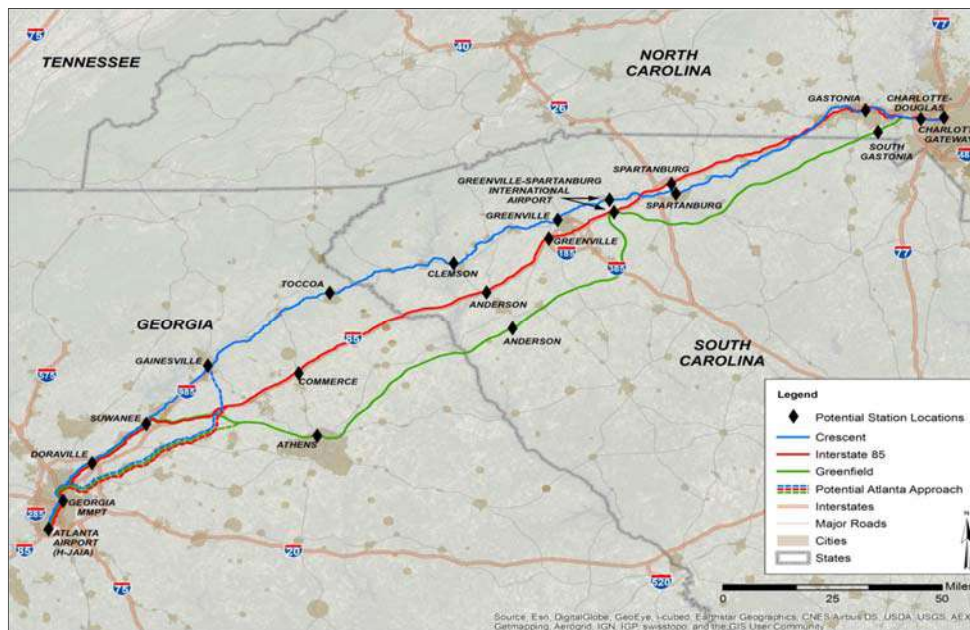
The *Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan* is a study to improve passenger rail service between the cities of Atlanta, Georgia and Charlotte, North Carolina (*Georgia Department of Transportation, 2019*). The Plan is part of the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor (SEHSR) passenger rail initiative by the Federal Railroad Administration. The corridor extends to four



major sections – Atlanta to Charlotte, Charlotte to Raleigh, Raleigh to Richmond, and Richmond to Washington, D.C.

As illustrated in Map 9-7, the SEHSR Corridor Investment Plan identified three alternatives for the Atlanta to Charlotte Passenger Rail Corridor. Two of the alternatives, the Crescent and Interstate 85, are proposed to travel directly through Oconee County, with a stop in Clemson proposed for the Crescent alternative and one in Anderson for the I-85 option. The Crescent alternative would share use with the Norfolk Southern rail line, while the I-85 alternative would predominantly use the I-85 right-of-way. The first tier of the planning process has been completed, with the I-85 alternative ranking highest among the six reviewed, followed closely by the Crescent option. During the second phase (tier II) of the project, analysis will include greater detail on potential environmental impacts for the three alternatives.

Map 9-7. Atlanta to Charlotte Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan Route Alternatives



Source: Georgia Department of Transportation, 2019

2. Trucking

Truck transport “is a cornerstone to the national freight transportation system,” with trucks transporting 70% of all the tonnage in the United States to and from rail, water and air transportation hubs and providing direct service between destinations for the transport of goods and materials (*South Carolina Statewide Freight Plan, 2017*). Lower operating costs and a higher level of service customization can make shipping by truck a cost effective and attractive alternative to shipping by rail or air. Truck movements in South Carolina totaled 300.6 million tons valued at \$506.2 billion in 2011. Primary freight corridors include the State’s five interstates, with major U.S. and State highways also accommodating significant freight flows.



Oconee County's strategic location along I-85 provides attractive intermodal freight network access for existing and prospective industries. The section of I-85 within Oconee County was used to transport between 25 and 50 million tons of freight in 2011. The portion of U.S. Highway 123 from Pickens County to Westminster was used to transport from one to five million tons of freight and as much as 1 million tons of freight was transported on other major federal and state roads in Oconee County including U.S. Highway 76 and S.C. Highways 107 and 76 during 2011.

3. Ports

The South Carolina Legislature established the *South Carolina Ports Authority (SCPA)* in 1942. SCPA facilities handled 2.3 million containers at its seaport terminals in Charleston and Georgetown and the inland port in Greer in 2018, a 6.4% increase in volume from the previous year (*SCPA, 2019*). The SCPA and the State of South Carolina and other agencies and partners are investing \$2.4 billion in port-related infrastructure in the coming decade.

Port service for Oconee County is available within five hours southeast (255 miles) through the Port of Charleston – one of the busiest container ports along the Southeast and Gulf coasts and the fastest growing major port in the nation. The Port consistently ranks among the top ten container ports nationwide and ranks 8th in dollar value of goods handled in 2017.

The infrastructure plan for Charleston includes construction of the new 286-acre Hugh H. Leatherman, Sr. container terminal, with completion of a significant portion of the anticipated work in 2021. While the Port currently has the deepest channels in the region, dredging is underway by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deepen the Charleston Harbor channel from 45 feet to 52 feet, a move that will make the Port even more attractive to freight carriers as the deepest port on the eastern coast.

South Carolina's first Inland Port opened in 2013 less than an hour east of Oconee County in Greer. The Inland ports extend the Port of Charleston's reach by providing an inland area connected by rail from which goods could be distributed to the Southeast. Norfolk Southern serves the inland port through its main rail line and the facility is positioned along the Interstate 85 corridor between Charlotte and Atlanta, where Norfolk Southern operates additional rail yards. Rail service maximizes tonnage moved per gallon of fuel for importers and exporters, helping them save costs and lower their carbon footprint. The Port serviced 13 top shipping container lines and 117,812 containers in FY 2017-2018 – a growth rate of 28.5% over the previous fiscal year (*S.C. Ports Authority, 2019*). The Greer Inland Port adds an additional benefit – access to empty containers – for regional shippers, who can send trucks to Greer for the containers they need to move their goods. The Greer Inland Port recently received a \$25 million grant to expand terminal capacity and allow for additional storage and processing tracks. The SCPA opened a second inland port in Dillon in April 2018. This facility is served by CSX railroad.



L. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The goals, objectives and strategies for implementation (GOIS) table summarizes the actions that will be undertaken in the coming decade to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the Transportation Element.

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Goal 9.1. Plan the location and development of transportation infrastructure to accommodate present and future needs.		
Objective 9.1.1. Develop and implement plans to guide decision-making on transportation issues.		
Strategy 9.1.1.1. Continue regional coordination with the Appalachian COG, municipalities and neighboring counties, and other public and private agencies in matters related to transportation, transit planning, and prioritization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • ACOG • Neighboring Counties • Related Public and Private Organizations 	2025
Strategy 9.1.1.2. Assign Oconee County planning staff to attend regional transportation planning meetings coordinated by ACOG to provide input from the County’s future land use perspective into the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • ACOG 	2027
Strategy 9.1.1.3. Commission studies for transportation corridors to examine conditions, seek multi-modal options, increase safety, optimize travel times and access to residential, commercial, recreation, and other essential services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • ACOG • SCDOT • County Transportation Committee 	2025
Strategy 9.1.1.4. Implement commissioned and in-house studies, in-part or completely. (For example: make CATbus stops safer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Relevant stakeholders 	2025
Goal 9.2. Upgrade and maintain the County road system in a manner that meets the needs of the growing population and provides safe and efficient routes through the County.		
Objective 9.2.1. Meet current and future need for quality transportation facilities throughout the County.		
Strategy 9.2.1.1. Acquire and allocate C-funds and leverage in-kind resources to maintain and enhance the County road network and supporting infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SCDOT • County Transportation Committee 	2025
Strategy 9.2.1.2. Develop an ongoing systematic road maintenance and upgrade program based on steady revenue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<u>Strategy 9.2.1.3.</u> Maintain a priority road upgrade list that addresses existing traffic “bottlenecks” and other traffic issues and reasonably anticipates issues expected to emerge in the coming decade.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2025
<u>Strategy 9.2.1.4.</u> Explore and adopt appropriate traffic management tools and techniques available through land use regulation that utilize concepts such as limiting the number of curb cuts in high traffic areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2021
<u>Strategy 9.2.1.5.</u> Prioritize evaluation of all roads within identified potential development areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • County Transportation Committee 	2025
<u>Strategy 9.2.1.6.</u> Continue to require developers to provide traffic studies to determine if a road must be upgraded to safely handle increased traffic loads and to cover the cost of such road upgrades.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2023
<u>Strategy 9.2.1.7.</u> Enhance communication with local and State departments of transportation on current and proposed projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • ACOG 	2021
<u>Strategy 9.2.1.8.</u> Upgrade County roads that were built prior to current standards and align roads that pose safety hazards, if feasible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually
Goal 9.3. Provide a safe, efficient, and accessible multi-modal transportation system.		
Objective 9.3.1. Provide and maintain a safe, efficient, and interconnected roadway network.		
<u>Strategy 9.3.1.1.</u> Encourage connected street systems within new developments and between new and existing developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	2023
<u>Strategy 9.3.1.2.</u> Explore incentives or requirements that increase the connectivity of local, connector, and arterial components of the County’s roadway network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Developers 	Annually
<u>Strategy 9.3.1.3.</u> Examine the need and feasibility of providing alternative-fuel stations at relevant County-owned properties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • ACOG 	2025



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Objective 9.3.2. Provide and maintain adequate, safe, and accessible trails, sidewalks and bicycle lanes in appropriate areas to promote alternative modes of travel by residents and visitors and to promote ecotourism opportunities.		
<u>Strategy 9.3.2.1.</u> Provide and encourage pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between existing and planned residential, park and recreation areas, trails, public facilities, and commercial and industrial uses that will enable alternative transportation opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Developers • Municipalities • Trail and Park Providers 	2023
<u>Strategy 9.3.2.2.</u> Develop standards that encourage developers to incorporate sidewalks and bicycle trails and lanes into residential developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021
<u>Strategy 9.3.2.3.</u> Seek funding opportunities to create nature trails, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and other facilities designed to make communities more walkable, reduce vehicular traffic, and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • SCPRT • Community Partners 	2023
<u>Strategy 9.3.2.4.</u> Find and repair any conflicts that exist within the current code of ordinances to provide and maintain adequate, safe, and accessible trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2021
Objective 9.3.3. Continue to evaluate and fund public transportation in urbanizing areas of Oconee County, expanding as needed to provide for ongoing growth and development.		
<u>Strategy 9.3.3.1.</u> Promote and assist in the establishment of commuter parking lots to encourage ride sharing and decrease traffic congestion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2025
<u>Strategy 9.3.3.2.</u> Continue to partner with Clemson Area Transit to provide existing service levels, while exploring opportunities to expand modes of public transportation such as van services and other non-traditional forms of mass transit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Clemson Area Transit • Community Partners 	2025
<u>Strategy 9.3.3.3.</u> Seek and secure methods of expanding public transportation in remote areas for clients of facilities such as SCDSS, hospitals, medical complexes, government facilities, and parks and recreation facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Clemson Area Transit • Community Partners 	2025
<u>Strategy 9.3.3.4.</u> Evaluate environmental and economic impacts and explore efforts to establish high-speed rail through the County, including rail stops in Clemson, SC and Toccoa, Georgia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Neighboring Counties 	2025
<u>Strategy 9.3.3.5.</u> Seek and establish appropriate methods of mass transit that will promote and enhance tourism such as water taxis, tour boats, and other modes that allow tourists and residents to enjoy natural resources without substantial traffic increases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Oconee SC • Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission • Oconee County 	2025



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<p><u>Strategy 9.3.3.6.</u> Support municipalities in their efforts to establish public transportation, while seeking options to expand service into unincorporated areas of the County as appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Clemson Area Transit • Municipalities • Community Partners 	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 9.3.3.7.</u> Work with public transportation providers to increase their rideshare and coverage to impact as many potential riders as possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • City of Seneca • Clemson Area Transit 	<p>2023</p>
<p>Goal 9.4. Provide a state-of-the-art regional airport for residents, businesses and industries, and visitors to the County and region.</p>		
<p>Objective 9.4.1. Continue upgrades to the Oconee County Regional Airport in a manner that serves existing clientele and establishes the facility as one of the premier small airports in the nation.</p>		
<p><u>Strategy 9.4.1.1.</u> Complete planned upgrades, including relocation of roads, strengthening of runway, and other necessary improvements as funding becomes available.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC Aeronautics Commission • Oconee County • Public/Private Partnerships 	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 9.4.1.2.</u> Develop an on-going capital improvements program aimed at upgrading the Airport facilities to attract use by additional employers and potential occupants of the business parks in the County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC Aeronautics Commission • Oconee County 	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 9.4.1.3.</u> Seek and establish ways to utilize the Airport to foster partnerships with Clemson University in areas such as hanger lease agreements and facility use agreements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC Aeronautics Commission • Oconee County 	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 9.4.1.4.</u> Identify Federal and State funds for investment in airport enhancements, including additional hangar space.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC Aeronautics Commission • Oconee County 	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 9.4.1.5.</u> Seek public/private partnerships to fund airport operations and expansions, including additional hangar space.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC Aeronautics Commission • Oconee County • Public Private Partnerships 	<p>2025</p>



Chapter 10. Priority Investment

The *South Carolina Priority Investment Act (PIA)* was signed into law in 2007. The PIA amends *Title 6, Chapter 29* of the *South Carolina Code of Laws*, also known as the *South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994*. The legislation introduced the two new elements of *Transportation* and *Priority Investment* to the comprehensive planning process. The Priority Investment Element is intended to facilitate the coordination of major capital improvements and provide direction for implementing recommended strategies of other Plan elements that call for capital improvements. The Priority Investment Element encourages local governments to examine future capital improvement needs, as well as identify planned funding sources for these improvements in the coming decade.

In addition to encouraging local governments to plan for long-term capital improvement needs and financing, the Priority Investment Element encourages stronger intergovernmental planning and coordination. Specifically, the legislation calls for comprehensive plans to include: "*a priority investment element that analyzes the likely federal, state, and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities during the next ten years, and recommends the projects for expenditure of those funds during the next ten years for needed public infrastructure and facilities such as water, sewer, roads, and schools. The recommendation of those projects for public expenditure must be done through coordination with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies.*"

A. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

While many of the public facilities such as governmental buildings and parks in Oconee County are owned and maintained by the County, many others are owned and maintained by entities such as the State of South Carolina, the School District of Oconee County, Tri-County Technical College, private utility providers, and the municipalities of Seneca, Walhalla, Westminster, Salem, and West Union. Many improvements to facilities throughout the County have been and will continue to be accomplished through coordination and cooperation with multiple public and private entities. Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one jurisdiction or organization can result in greater efficiency and less cost to taxpayers. Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to the success of an initiative, such as the development of a safe and efficient transportation network.

The *South Carolina Priority Investment Act* requires that the recommendation of capital improvement projects requiring public expenditure be done through "*coordination with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies.*" The Act defines adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies as "*those counties, municipalities, public service districts, school districts, public and private utilities, transportation agencies, and other public entities that are affected by or have planning authority over the public project.*" Adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies identified as providing public facilities or related services within Oconee County are listed in Table 10-1.



Table 10-1. Adjacent and Relevant Jurisdictions and Agencies in Oconee County

Jurisdiction/Agency	Capital Improvement/Public Facilities/Services
Municipalities and Adjacent Jurisdictions	
Town of Salem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ County municipality ▪ Provider of water service, law enforcement, fire service
City of Seneca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ County municipality ▪ Water Treatment Plant ▪ Provider of water and electric service; law enforcement; fire service; garbage and recycling pick up ▪ Provider/manager of City parks and recreation facilities
City of Walhalla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ County municipality ▪ Water Treatment Plant ▪ Provider of water service, law enforcement, fire service; garbage and recycling pick up ▪ Provider/manager of City parks and recreation facilities
City of Westminster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ County municipality ▪ Provider of water, and electric service; law enforcement; fire service; garbage and recycling pick up ▪ Provider/manager of City parks and recreation facilities
Town of West Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ County municipality ▪ Provider law enforcement ▪ Provider/manager of City parks and recreation facilities
Neighboring Municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ City of Clemson (provider of water in small area of County) ▪ City of Anderson
Neighboring Counties (SC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anderson County, SC ▪ Pickens County, SC
Neighboring Counties (NC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Macon County, NC ▪ Jackson County, NC ▪ Transylvania County, NC
Neighboring Counties (GA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Franklin County, GA ▪ Habersham County, GA ▪ Hart County, GA ▪ Rabun County, GA ▪ Stephens County, GA
Relevant Government and Public Agencies	
State of South Carolina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ S.C. Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) - owns and manages much of the Jocassee Gorges, manages Heritage Trust Program, assists U.S. Forest Service in management of Sumter National Forest ▪ S.C. Department of Transportation (SCDOT) - statewide transportation planning; road maintenance and improvements for state roads and U.S. highways; distributes C funds ▪ S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) – manages state parks in County ▪ S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) - public health, septic tank permitting, water/air quality permitting and management



Table 10-1. Adjacent and Relevant Jurisdictions and Agencies, *Continued*

Jurisdiction/Agency	Capital Improvement/Public Facilities/Services
Relevant Government and Public Agencies	
Appalachian Council of Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transportation planning ▪ Environmental planning, including Water Quality Management Plan ▪ Economic development and workforce planning ▪ Hazard mitigation planning ▪ Aging support programs ▪ Other Local government assistance
Keowee Fire Special Tax District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Special tax district for the provision of fire service for 30-square mile area on/near Lake Keowee, including the Oconee Nuclear Station
Oconee County Public Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Library system for the County with branches in Walhalla, Westminster, Salem, and Seneca
Oconee Economic Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruitment of capital investment and job creation in Oconee County ▪ Development and marketing of industrial parks ▪ Industrial retention program
Tri-County Technical College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oconee County higher education campus of the S.C. Technical College System
School District of Oconee County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PreK-12 Public Schools ▪ Adult Education ▪ Career and vocational education
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Management of Lake Hartwell and associated facilities, including shoreline management and four lakeside parks in Oconee County
USDA Forest Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Management of the Sumter National Forest and associated facilities and much of the area surrounding the Chattooga River
Other Relevant Organizations and Agencies	
Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provider of electric service
Clemson Area Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public transit provider
Duke Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provider of electric service - Oconee Nuclear Station, Keowee Hydro Station, Jocassee and Bad Creek Generating Stations ▪ Management of Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee and associated facilities, including shoreline management
Foothills YMCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nonprofit provider of recreation facilities and programs
Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wastewater treatment plant, provider of sewer service ▪ Municipalities are members of this authority
Oconee Memorial Hospital (Prisma Health Upstate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hospital, provides EMS services
Pioneer Rural Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non-profit provider of water service
Rosa Clark Free Medical Clinic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provider of affordable healthcare services for those in need of assistance
Senior Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provider of senior services in Oconee County, including transportation



B. FUTURE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT NEEDS AND FUNDING SOURCES

A number of public infrastructure and facilities needs have been identified for Oconee County for the coming decade through the development of the required elements of the Comprehensive Plan, as well as previously developed plans and studies. These capital improvements include those that will be funded and accomplished by the County or its municipalities, as well as projects that will be funded and accomplished by other entities such as the Appalachian Regional Council of Governments, the School District of Oconee County, and local utility providers. Oconee County must continue to explore new partnerships and funding sources to meet capital needs, while ensuring that the most critical needs are met.

The top public infrastructure and capital investment priorities for Oconee County in the coming decade include:

1. Provide quality public services, facilities, and infrastructure to accommodate the current and future needs of current and future residents, businesses, and visitors, to ensure health and safety and meet applicable local, federal, and state requirements.
2. Provide a modern, functional, and multi-modal transportation system to reduce traffic congestion and provide affordable transport for all citizens, particularly the work force.
3. Preserve, protect, and enhance the County's natural, cultural, recreational, agricultural, and historic resources.
4. Study and address the land use, transportation, and development issues related to fast growing and changing areas of the County.
5. Provide, maintain, and improve public recreation facilities to accommodate the current and future needs of County residents and visitors of all ages.
6. Provide the facilities, infrastructure, workforce, and support needed to attract and retain quality industrial and commercial development and diversify the County's employment and tax base.
7. Provide, maintain, and improve public education facilities to accommodate the current and future lifelong learning needs of County residents of all ages.

Anticipated funding from federal, state, and local sources for public infrastructure and facilities during the next ten years is outlined in Table 10-2 and is based on recent funding levels.



Table 10-2. Anticipated Annual Funding Sources

Funding Source	Description	Priorities Addressed	Anticipated Annual Funding*
Oconee County General Fund	Annually appropriated operating fund used to account for all financial sources and uses except those required to be accounted for in another fund. Funded activities constitute the core and administrative tasks of the County.	1, 3, 4, 5	\$29,306,258 ¹
Oconee County Economic Alliance Development Capital Projects Fund	Supports the future economic vision of the county, utilizing millage and amplifying private, federal, local, and nonprofit resources.	6	\$1,096,728 ¹
Oconee County Special Revenue Funds	Proceeds of specific revenue sources that are legally restricted for specified purposes; Includes special revenue funding for Tri-County Technical College (\$1,670,000) and Road Maintenance (\$1,171,920). State and local accommodations tax revenue is restricted to expenditures that attract tourism.	1, 2, 6, 7	\$6,161,587 ¹
Oconee County Capital Projects Funds	Financial resources to be used for the acquisition or construction of major capital facilities. Includes Economic Development Capital Projects Fund (\$769,000) and the Bridge and Culvert Fund (\$530,000) for replacement and repair of bridges and large culverts on County-owned roads.	1, 2, 6	\$1,299,000 ¹
C- Funds	Funds derived from a State user tax on gasoline sales and allocated to each county; Local funds allocated by County Transportation Committee for improvements to state and local roads and bridges, resurfacing, and other eligible transportation projects. Oconee County and its five municipalities request funding as needed based on the annual allocation amount. Requested funds are placed in the County's Special Revenue Fund.	2	\$1,951,600 ² (State allocation, available on an as needed basis)
U.S Forest Service, National Forestry Title I	Grant funding provided by the USFS to counties with National Forest lands for transportation improvements.	2	\$220,000 ¹
ACOG Rural Transportation Improvement Program	Transportation improvement program that includes capital transportation projects for federally funded transportation facilities and transit projects.	1, 2	\$7.579 million in annual <i>Guideshare</i> funding for FY 2017-2022 for the Appalachian COG region ³
SCDOT Transportation Alternatives Program	State funds allocated for non-traditional transportation related activities such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities and pedestrian streetscaping.	1, 2	FY 2018-2019: \$1.83 million for areas with population > 5,000 and < 200,000; \$2.6 million for areas with population < 5,000 ⁴



Table 10-2. Anticipated Annual Funding Sources

Funding Source	Description	Priorities Addressed	Anticipated Annual Funding*
Grants	Grants are available from a number of public and private sources for a wide range of capital projects. Projects must meet eligibility requirements and are typically competitive.	All	Vary depending on the grant source, type of project, and requirements; most require matching local funds

* Anticipated funding based on recent funding levels

Sources: ¹ Oconee County, SC 2018-2019 Budget Document; ² SCDOT, S.C. Secondary "C" Program Apportionment of Funds for FY 2018-19; ³ ACOG, 2017-2022 Rural Transportation Improvement Plan, June 2016; ⁴ SCDOT, SC Transportation Alternatives Program, June 2019

C. OCONEE COUNTY FACILITIES

Capital improvements are defined as major expenditures for construction of facilities, highways, parks, land acquisition, and related needs. For the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, capital improvements focus on areas that apply more directly to land use, including paving, building, and land expenditures. The *2018-2019 Five Year Capital Plan for Oconee County* provides short and long-term capital expenditure goals (Table 10-4). Updated annually and included in the annual budget presented to County Council, the Plan provides a blueprint for future economic, land use, and infrastructure development and redevelopment. It is intended to assist in "implementing policies and programs that accomplish the ideals set out in the County's mission and vision statements in a manner that ensures financial sustainability over the long term."

Table 10-4. 2018-2019 Oconee County Five Year Capital Plan Projects

Project Name	Department/Description	Funding Source/Year/Priority #
Facilities		\$1,345,000
<u>Restroom Renovation</u> Chau Ram High Falls	<i>PRT</i> – Renovate restrooms for ADA compliance	<i>Dept. Budget</i> FY 2019 - \$285,000 FY 2019 - \$275,000
Airport – FAA Guidance	<i>Airport</i> – purchase property to reduce hazard, comply with FAA guidelines, use for additional hangars	<i>Other Funding Source</i> FY 2021 - \$285,000
Westminster Magistrate	<i>Magistrate</i> – rebuild or renovate magistrate building	<i>Bond</i> FY 2020 - \$750,000
Transportation Improvements		\$8,575,000
<u>Culverts</u> Jess Crenshaw Road Avondale Drive Stribling Shoals Road Amanda Way	<i>Roads and Bridges</i> – replacement with larger culvert	<i>See Table 10-5 for funding sources</i> FY 2019 - \$ 75,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2020 - \$350,000 <i>priority #2</i> FY 2021 - \$450,000 <i>priority #4</i> FY 2022 - \$250,000 <i>priority #5</i>



Table 10-4. 2018-2019 Oconee County Five Year Capital Plan Projects

Project Name	Department/Description	Funding Source/Year/Priority #
<u>Bridges</u> Cherokee Lake Road Bridge Alberts Road Bridge	<i>Roads and Bridges –</i> Replace 45' span bridge Replace 33' span bridge	<i>See Table 10-5 for funding sources</i> FY 2020 - \$450,000 <i>priority #3</i> FY 2023 - \$250,000 <i>priority #6</i>
Yearly Road Construction	<i>Roads and Bridges – annual contract to pave 3 to 5 miles of road, including crack sealing and striping</i>	<i>See Table 10-5 for funding sources</i> FY 2019 - \$1,250,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2020 - \$1,100,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2021 - \$1,100,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2022 - \$1,100,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2023 - \$1,100,000 <i>priority #1</i>
Various Road Construction	<i>Roads and Bridges – annual construction of one gravel road constructed to pave</i>	<i>Federal Funds</i> FY 2019 - \$220,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2020 - \$220,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2021 - \$220,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2022 - \$220,000 <i>priority #1</i> FY 2023 - \$220,000 <i>priority #1</i>

Source: 2018-2019 Oconee County Five Year Capital Plan

Oconee County owns and maintains a number of public properties. The locations of major facilities owned by Oconee County are listed in Table 7-1. Recreation facilities are detailed in Table 7-12 of the *Community Facilities Element*.

Additional County facility improvement priorities are provided in the *Oconee County 2019 Strategic Planning Report*. The report is the result of the annual planning session attended by County Council, staff, and interested citizens to review the previous year’s accomplishment and discuss priorities. Capital improvements identified in the Report are provided in Table 10-5.

Table 10-5. Oconee County 2019 Strategic Plan Report Capital Improvements Priorities

Priorities	Estimated Cost	Council Funding Recommendations
Construct Oakway School walking path	\$20,000	*
Greenway connection from Palmetto Trail to Green Crescent Trail	Not available	Grants, ATAX
Expand Oconee County Regional Airport runway and construct hangers	\$1,000,000	Bonds, property taxes on planes, hanger leases
Oconee County Park Upgrades	\$300,000 annually	Grants, ATAX
Utica Revitalization	\$250,000 annually	Grants,
Economic Opportunity Zones	\$250,000 annually	Grants
Identify possible location and conduct feasibility study for technology incubator/relocation of Oconee Economic Alliance office	\$1,500,000	Grants
Continue Development of Industrial Parks	Ongoing	Economic Development Millage/Fees in Lieu of Taxes



Table 10-5. Oconee County 2019 Strategic Plan Report Capital Improvements Priorities

Priorities	Estimated Cost	Council Funding Recommendations
Establish Bountyland Fire Substation	\$500,000	Fund approved FY 2016
Review Brown Building current and future use	\$30,000	Operational General fund
Plan Bountyland S.C. Hwy. 188/28 corridor	\$50,000	FY 2020 budget
U.S. Hwy. 123 Corridor Plan implementation	\$39,000	FY 2020 budget

* Funding recommendation not provided

Source: Oconee County 2019 Strategic Plan Report

D. TRANSPORTATION AND ROADS

Planning to meet current and future transportation needs is accomplished through programs at the state, regional and local levels. For Oconee County, transportation planning and funding allocations are provided by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), the Appalachian Council of Governments (CMCOG), and the Oconee County Transportation Committee.

1. Regional Rural Transportation Program

As the designated transportation agency for the non-urbanized areas of the Appalachian Council of Governments Region, the ACOG is responsible for carrying out the rural transportation planning process for the six-county region that includes Oconee County. The primary responsibilities of the ACOG are to:

- Develop a *Rural Long Range Transportation Plan* (LRTP) to provide the 25-year rural transportation vision; and
- Develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) with a list of specific projects for which federal funds are anticipated.

The primary transportation needs in Oconee County are detailed in the *Rural Long Range Transportation Plan 2040* that was adopted in 2016 and in the *Oconee County Transportation Element*. These needs include five intersection improvement projects with funding dependent on Guideshare program allocations. Potential projects for which funding has not been identified to date include six intersection improvement projects, three access management projects, four bridge improvement projects, eight road segments where the condition of the pavement is in need of repair, and two priority traffic signalization projects.

The *ACOG Rural Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP)* is the region's six-year transportation improvement program for all capital projects or program areas receiving federal funding. The *2017-2022 RTIP* for the Appalachian COG region was most recently amended in 2019. As detailed in Table 8-6 of the Transportation Element, there are four RTIP projects in Oconee County, totaling \$300,000 for FY 2017, \$750,000 for FY 2018, \$2 million for FY 2019, \$850,000 for FY 2020, \$1.8 million for FY 2021, and \$2.75 million in FY 2022. These projects



include planning, right-of-way acquisition, and construction for intersection improvements on U.S. Highway 123 at Davis Creek Road, S.C. Highway 24 at Oakway Road, S.C. Highway 59 at S.C. Highway 182/243, and J.P. Stevens Road at West Cherry Road and at Martin Creek Road. The U.S. Highway 123 intersection project is ranked first in priority among all intersection improvement projects in the ACOG region.

2. SCDOT Transportation Alternatives Program

Oconee County is eligible for transportation enhancement funding under the *Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)* administered by SCDOT. TAP projects are federally-funded, community-based projects that provide opportunities for local governments to pursue non-traditional transportation related activities such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities and pedestrian streetscaping projects that might not otherwise be possible. Transportation Alternatives funds generally comprise 80% of the total project cost, with a 20% match from local governments.

SCDOT funding is provided through three population-based programs. Jurisdictions with populations of less than 200,000 and greater than 5,000, including Oconee County and the City of Seneca, have a designated funding pool of more than \$1.8 million. SCDOT has designated \$2.6 million for areas with a population of less than 5,000, which includes the other municipalities in Oconee County. Projects proposed by governmental bodies located in areas outside of Transportation Management Areas, such as Oconee County and its municipalities, are considered under the statewide program, with distribution of funds determined by the SCDOT Commission. These projects are limited to a maximum of \$400,000.

3. C-Fund Allocation

At the local level, C-Funds are available for construction, improvements, or maintenance on the State highway system; local paving or improvements to county or city roads; street and traffic signs; and other road and bridge projects. Resurfacing, drainage improvements, and sidewalk construction may also be accomplished with C-Funds. C-Funds are derived from a statewide 2.9925 cent per gallon user tax on gasoline sales that are deposited in the County Transportation Fund and allocated to the counties through a formula based on total number of vehicles registered and miles of road within each county. The allocation per gallon will increase by 0.3325 cent per gallon each fiscal year through 2021, when it will reach a total of 3.99 cents per gallon. At least 25% of the allocated C-Funds must be spent on state roads. Each county has a *County Transportation Committee* with members appointed by the county legislative delegation. The Oconee County C-Fund Committee has the authority to select and approve projects to be funded utilizing C-Funds. The C-Fund apportionment for Oconee County was \$1,951,600 million in FY 2018-2019.



4. Other Road Improvement Funds

Oconee County assesses an annual millage of 2.1 for *road maintenance*. Road maintenance funding is used to maintain roadways including repair of pot holes and road shoulders and road resurfacing within the County. Revenue from the road maintenance millage was \$1,171,920 in FY 2019. An additional 1.0 mill is also assessed for the replacement and repair of bridges and large culverts on County-owned roads. Revenue from the *Bridges and Culverts* millage was \$530,000 in FY 2019.

Oconee County also receives grant funding from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) for transportation improvements. *National Forestry Title I* funding is provided to counties with National Forest lands, with allocation based on gross receipts from all sources such as timber and special permits. The County received \$220,000 in FY 2019 from the National Forestry Title I grant.

E. PUBLIC K-12 SCHOOLS AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

1. School District of Oconee County

The School District of Oconee County (SDOC) operates ten elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools, providing educational services for nearly 10,500 students in grades pre-K through 12. The District's Hamilton Career Center offers more than 20 career and technology education programs that support over 1,000 students from the District's three high schools as they prepare for transition to career and college. The District also offers adult education in the form of a diploma program, High School Equivalency classes, and career readiness instruction and testing.

Construction began in April 2019 on the School District's new Hamilton Career and Technology Center. The \$35 million, 140,000 ft² Center will be co-located in the Oconee County Industry and Technology Park with the new Oconee Campus of Tri-County Technical College. Completion of the Center is anticipated in August 2020. Once the new facility is completed, the current Hamilton Career Center building will be repurposed as the home of the Oconee Academy alternative school and Adult Education. The \$400,000 renovation will also accommodate the District's maintenance and food services departments, as well as the early learning program. The remodeled building is expected to be ready for occupation in August 2020.

SDOC has two additional projects slated for the coming decade. Construction of a new Seneca Middle school is planned at an estimated cost of \$40 to \$45 million, with completion anticipated in August 2023. An addition is planned for the James M. Brown Elementary School that will add six to eight classrooms and a gymnasium at an estimated cost of \$8 to \$10 million, with projected occupancy in August 2025.



2. Tri-County Technical College

Tri-County Technical College (TCTC) is the fifth largest of the 16 public, two-year colleges that comprise the South Carolina Technical Education System. The Oconee County campus in the Oconee County Industry and Technology Park opened in 2018. The campus will house the School District's new Career Center. The campus includes a new \$5.5 million, 37,000 ft² instructional and administrative building. Although the College will monitor usage and space needs on the Oconee County campus, there are currently no plans for new construction in the next decade.

F. WATER FACILITIES

Access to water services is available in many areas of the County through seven primary public providers: the cities of Clemson, Seneca, Westminster, and Walhalla; the towns of Salem and West Union; and Pioneer Rural Water District. Water is also provided by several individual systems. Seneca Light and Water draws surface water from Lake Keowee, the City of Walhalla from Coneross Creek, and the City of Westminster from the Chauga River. Water for the City of Clemson, the towns of Salem and West Union, and the Pioneer Rural Water District is purchased. Water treatment is provided by the City of Seneca's Water Treatment Plant with a capacity of 20 MGD, the City of Walhalla's Coneross Creek Water Treatment Plant with a capacity of 3 MGD, and the City of Westminster's Water Treatment Plant with a capacity of 2 MGD. The Pioneer Rural Water District's new Water Treatment Plant is expected to begin operation in the summer of 2019, with an initial capacity of 2.5 MGD.

The City of Walhalla began construction on a new water treatment facility in January 2019 that will draw water from the Cane Creek Branch of Lake Keowee, with a capacity of 4 MGD. The cost of the new facility is \$20.8 million, with completion expected in the fall of 2020.

The City of Westminster has applied for a ConserFund loan from the S.C. Office of Regulatory Staff to upgrade its pumps to five variable frequency drive pumps that will be more energy efficient. Completion of the project is anticipated in 2020 at a projected cost of \$414,556.

G. WASTEWATER FACILITIES

The availability of sewer service is limited in Oconee County, with access concentrated in the developed areas in and near the cities of Seneca, Westminster and Walhalla, along the U.S. Highway 123 corridor between Seneca and Westminster, the S.C. Highway 11 corridor that connects Walhalla to U.S. Highway 123, and along the S.C. Highway 59 corridor extending south from Seneca. Access to wastewater treatment is provided by five primary providers, the Oconee Joint Regional Sewer Authority (OJRSA), the Town of West Union, and the cities of Seneca, Walhalla, and Westminster. Public wastewater treatment is provided at OJRSA's Coneross Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant, with a capacity of 7.8 MGD.



The OJRSA is working with Oconee County on an expansion of the wastewater conveyance system to the Fair Play community in the southern area of the County. The purpose of the project is to provide reliable sewer service and enable economic development opportunities along the I-85 corridor. The S.C. Rural Infrastructure Authority has approved \$935,566 and the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce has approved \$3.7 million in funding for the estimated \$5.29 million project. Oconee County will also be contributing \$655,570, including engineering and permitting, for the project. Construction is expected to take approximately two years, with completion anticipated in 2021. This project is included in the *Oconee County 2019 Strategic Planning Report* (Table 10-5).

H. RECREATION FACILITIES

Oconee County owns, operates and maintains three public parks and leases eight public boat ramps. The parks all include campsites with water and electricity, picnic shelters, playgrounds, and other recreation opportunities. While Chau Ram County Park includes a 40-foot waterfall, suspension bridge, and miles of hiking trails, High Falls and South Cove County Parks offer waterfront access to Lake Keowee, including boat ramps, fishing piers, and swimming areas.

Oconee County purchased a 218-acre parcel of land adjacent to Chau Ram County Park in the summer of 2019, at a cost of \$765,000, including \$500,000 in grant funding. The purchase will enable the County to plan for expansion of camping and hiking opportunities, as well as mountain biking. Master planning for the site is expected at a later date.

Oconee County is working with Duke Energy on the possibility of an expansion to the High Falls County Park. The potential expansion would add 36 acres of land in a lease agreement with Duke Energy. A master plan for High Falls II has been completed in partnership with Duke Energy and is awaiting funding availability. The expansion will include a new campground, boat ramp, rental cabins, and associated infrastructure at an estimated cost of \$5 to \$7 million.

I. AIRPORT

Aviation services for Oconee County and the surrounding area are available at the Oconee County Regional Airport (CEU) on Airport Road in Seneca. The Airport is owned and operated by Oconee County and includes a 5,000 feet by 100 feet paved runway with a precision GPS instrument approach and a non-precision GPS instrument approach. Airport staff report a dramatic increase in airport use in recent years spurred by local manufacturing companies, new home owners, vacationers, construction crews, military traffic, and visitors to Clemson University events. Air traffic related to Clemson games requires that CEU utilizes a temporary control tower on game day weekends and for the Greer approach as needed.

Plans for the Oconee Regional Airport include relocation of Mt. Nebo Road out of the Runway Protection Zone to the Airport. The Road will be re-routed around the Mt. Nebo Church parking lot to connect with Harbin Acres Road. The project serves two purposes – to improve safety in



CEU's airspace safety buffer and to provide additional aircraft parking on an adjacent area for peak air traffic times such as surrounding Clemson home football games. The project will be funded primarily by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport Improvement Program, with additional funding provided by the S.C. Aeronautics Commission and Oconee County. This project is included in the *Oconee County 2019 Strategic Planning Report* (Table 10-5).

J. LIBRARY

The Oconee County Public Library system includes four facilities: the main branch in Walhalla constructed in 1979, the Seneca branch that was built in 1953 and expanded in 1983, the Westminster branch constructed in 1979, and the Salem branch that shares space with the Salem Town Hall.

In 2014, the Library developed a facility plan to build, replace, or upgrade aging facilities to serve the current and future needs of the community. The following projects are listed in the order of priority, with funding sources yet to be identified. Estimated project costs were provided in 2014 and are subject to increases. However, though the Library Board approved this plan, the Oconee County Council has not voted on the plan.

- Replace the aging Seneca Library with a new 32,000 square foot facility at an estimated cost of \$9 million.
- Renovate and expand the aging Westminster Library by 3,250 square feet for a total building size of 8,300 square feet at an estimated cost of \$1.3 million.
- Select and purchase sites for new Salem and Fair Play library locations, with estimated costs of \$110,000 and \$150,000, respectively.
- Renovate and reconfigure the aging Walhalla main library at an estimated cost of \$1 million.
- Construct new 7,000 square foot facilities for the Salem Library and the Fair Play/South County Library at an estimated cost of \$1.9 million for each building.

K. COORDINATION AND NOTIFICATION

As required by the provisions of the *South Carolina Priority Investment Act*, Oconee County notifies and coordinates with adjacent jurisdictions and relevant agencies when recommending expenditures on public infrastructure and facilities projects. Throughout the development of the *Priority Investment Element*, Oconee County consulted the numerous municipalities, adjacent jurisdictions, and relevant agencies listed in Table 10-1. These consultations addressed current public capital facilities needs and the past, on-going, and future capital facilities projects that currently serve or are planned to serve the residents and employers of Oconee County. A draft of the *Priority Investment Element* was also sent to each identified jurisdiction and agency for review and comment prior to adoption. Existing plans from other jurisdictions or agencies that



impact the provision of capital facilities and related services for County residents were also consulted and incorporated by reference in the appropriate Comprehensive Plan elements.



L. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The goals, objectives and strategies for implementation (GOIS) table summarizes the actions that will be undertaken in the coming decade to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the Priority Investment Element.

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Goal 10.1. Identify and prioritize long range public infrastructure and facilities needs.		
Objective 10.1.1. Continue to plan for and prioritize public infrastructure and facilities needs.		
Strategy 10.1.1.1. Continue to update the County's Five-Year Capital Plan as part of the annual budget process to provide the highest level of service and facilities for Oconee County citizens.	• Oconee County	2025
Strategy 10.1.1.2. Review, update, and adopt the Infrastructure Master Plan.	• Oconee County	Annually
Strategy 10.1.1.3. Utilize the County's Five-Year Capital Plan to systematically construct and upgrade facilities identified in the Infrastructure Master Plan	• Oconee County	2030
Strategy 10.1.1.4. Create and update plans and cost estimates that address specific infrastructure priorities with accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions.	• Oconee County	Annually
Strategy 10.1.1.5. Establish programs to review all existing community facilities to determine needed upgrades resulting from both the aging of the facilities and the population growth of Oconee County.	• Oconee County	2030
Strategy 10.1.1.6. Prioritize infrastructure and facilities needs and capital investment.	• Oconee County	Annually
Objective 10.1.2. Continue a comprehensive capital projects planning and implementation process to address future conditions and needs.		
Strategy 10.1.2.1. Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves our natural resources.	• Oconee County	Annually
Strategy 10.1.2.2. Manage development in a manner that ensures our natural resources and lifestyle enhance sustainable economic growth and job opportunities.	• Oconee County	Annually
Strategy 10.1.2.3. Promote and enhance access to affordable housing through both public and private cooperation.	• Oconee County • Housing Developers	Annually
Strategy 10.1.2.4. Upgrade solid waste and recycling facilities to improve services and allow for needed upgrades and expansion to provide for anticipated growth.	• Oconee County	2030
Strategy 10.1.2.5. Regularly review public safety needs and enhance facilities as required and needed.	• Oconee County	Annually



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.6.</u> Work to address the age-related challenges and needs that may arise among Oconee County's aging population, particularly focusing on issues not adequately dealt with by state and federal programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Aging Services • Faith-based Communities • Healthcare Providers • Oconee County 	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.7.</u> Upgrade and maintain the County road system in a manner that meets the needs of Oconee County's growing population and provides safe and efficient routes through the County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SCDOT • ACOG 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.8.</u> Continue to evaluate and fund public transportation in urbanizing areas of Oconee County, expanding as needed to provide for ongoing growth and development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • CatBus • SCDOT • ACOG 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.9.</u> Expand bicycle and pedestrian routes to allow for greater use of alternative forms of transportation and to promote ecotourism opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SCDOT • ACOG • Municipalities 	<p>2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.10.</u> Continue upgrades to the Oconee County Airport in a manner that not only serves existing clientele, but establishes the facility as a premier small airport.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.11.</u> Promote a countywide arts program to facilitate an appreciation for the arts and other cultural facilities in Oconee County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Arts Organizations • School District of Oconee County (SDOC) 	<p>2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.12.</u> Conserve and protect features of significant local, regional, and national interest, such as scenic highways, state parks, historic sites, and expand efforts to promote these features for tourism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SCPRT • SCDOT • Historic Preservation Organizations 	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.2.13.</u> Maintain and update the County's geographic information system (GIS) and related data.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>Annually</p>
<p>Objective 10.1.3. Support adjacent jurisdictions and relevant agencies in planning for future public infrastructure and facilities needs.</p>		
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.3.1.</u> Support and participate in the efforts of Oconee County municipalities in planning for future public infrastructure and facilities needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	<p>Annually</p>



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.3.2.</u> Support and participate in the efforts of adjacent and relevant jurisdictions in planning for future public infrastructure and facilities needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Neighboring Counties and Municipalities • State and Federal Agencies • ACOG 	<p>2020-2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.1.3.3.</u> Support and participate in the efforts of relevant agencies in planning for future public infrastructure and facilities needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • SDOC • Tri-County Technical College (TCTC) • Cultural Organizations • Utilities • Aging and Social Services providers • Healthcare providers 	<p>2030</p>
<p>Goal 10.2. Pursue funding and partnerships to support identified public infrastructure needs.</p>		
<p>Objective 10.2.1. Explore and evaluate alternative methods of obtaining revenue and grant monies to fund capital improvement and new infrastructure.</p>		
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.1.</u> Identify and work to establish alternative revenue sources such as special tax districts and the local option sales tax.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.2.</u> Broaden utilization of grants to assist with capital projects and leverage existing resources to provide matching funds for grant opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>2030</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.3.</u> Explore and pursue other revenue sources such as user-based fees, special assessments, impact fees and other sources to help fund infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.4.</u> Work with state and federal leaders to change formulas for state and federal funding that rely on Census figures that fail to account for the large percentage of non-resident property owners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>2025</p>
<p><u>Strategy 10.2.1.5.</u> Encourage and seek partnership opportunities to eliminate unnecessary redundancies, strengthen funding proposals, and establish public/private partnerships to meet public infrastructure and facilities needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Adjacent/Relevant Jurisdictions and Agencies • Private Industries 	<p>Annually</p>



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Goal 10.3. Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions and relevant agencies in planning for capital improvements.		
Objective 10.3.1. Notify and coordinate with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies when recommending projects for the expenditure of funds for public infrastructure and facilities.		
Strategy 10.3.1.1. Improve communication and cooperation between the County and municipalities, state and federal agencies, and other public and private entities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	Annually
Strategy 10.3.1.2. Coordinate with adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies on updates to the Oconee County <i>Priority Investment Element</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Adjacent/Relevant Jurisdictions and Agencies 	Annually
Strategy 10.3.1.3. Notify and coordinate with appropriate adjacent and relevant jurisdictions and agencies when recommending public infrastructure and facilities projects that require the expenditure of public funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Adjacent/Relevant Jurisdictions and Agencies 	2030
Strategy 10.3.1.4. Consider relevant existing plans from adjacent jurisdictions and relevant agencies when recommending public infrastructure and facilities projects that require the expenditure of public funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	2030



Chapter 11. Land Use

Land is a finite resource. Planning for land use plays an essential role in balancing the demand for specific types of uses with the need to protect the community's amenities, character, and resource base. The goal of land use planning is to guide a more efficient land development pattern that maximizes community resources and enhances the overall quality of life for Oconee County residents.

The Land Use Element is the centerpiece of the Comprehensive Plan, representing a culmination of the issues, information, analyses, goals and objectives of the other eight required plan elements. These elements provide the foundation of the Land Use Element and inform the need for various types of land uses to include residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, public and institutional, and recreational land.

Preparation of the Land Use Element is also the most challenging task in the comprehensive planning process. The Element recognizes current and historical trends while providing an opportunity to reflect on strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Because the process relies on multiple variables, crafting a future land use plan is not an exact science. While facts and data play an important role, less quantifiable factors of public opinion, beliefs, and values are equally important. Variables including market demand, land availability, population and economic trends, the environment, transportation, community character, current policies, natural disasters, and the provision of community facilities and services must also be taken into account in land use planning.

The purpose of this chapter is to profile existing land use patterns and forecast future land use. An existing land use inventory has been developed by County staff using the parcel-based land use data in the County's Geographic Information System (GIS). The Future Land Use Plan reflects the community's desire to guide and direct growth, supplemented with goals, policies and strategies that support and reflect those in the eight preceding plan elements. The Future Land Use Map in this chapter serves as a visual representation of the land use goals, policies and strategies that have been derived from community and Planning Commission input as part of the other eight planning elements. Relevant documents have been referenced and incorporated where appropriate.

A. EXISTING LAND USE

In order to plan for future development in Oconee County, it is necessary to inventory current land uses, assess development patterns and trends, identify undeveloped properties, examine the impact of existing land use regulation, and evaluate the capability of existing conditions to accommodate the future land use needs of the community. An inventory of existing land uses within the County was developed through a geographic information system (GIS) analysis of digital mapping data. The mapping of existing land uses integrates land use category definitions with Oconee County Assessor tax parcel data, as well as County staff knowledge.



Land uses in the unincorporated area of Oconee County were classified and mapped using the following ten categories as profiled in Table 11-1 and Figure 11-1 and depicted in the *Existing Land Use Map* (Map 11-1).

Table 11-1. 2019 Existing County Land Use by Area*

Existing Land Use	Acres	%
Agriculture and Forest	191,778.3	51.2%
Sumter National Forest	83,633.4	22.3%
Single-Family Residential	41,891.8	11.2%
Vacant Land	18,745.4	5.0%
Utility	11,436.6	3.1%
Public and Institutional	9,901.4	2.6%
Parks and Recreation	8,729.9	2.3%
Commercial	5,726.4	1.5%
Industrial	1,917.2	0.5%
Manufactured Home Park	422.1	0.1%
Multi-Family Residential	300.3	0.1%
Total	374,482.9	100.0%

* Acreages do not include road and rail rights-of-way

Sources: Oconee County Assessor, November 2018; Oconee County GIS Manager, May 2019

- **Agriculture and Forest** – Land used primarily for agricultural and forestry purposes, including uses accessory to agriculture or forestry such as residences for farm owners or workers and storage for equipment or crops. Properties that are less than five acres in size and are classified in the Oconee County Assessor’s database as agricultural for taxation purposes but include a residence are not included in this land use category. Land in agriculture or forestry use is the most prevalent in Oconee County, accounting for more than half or 191,778 acres of the County’s total unincorporated land area.
- **Commercial** – Land used to conduct businesses, trade activities, professional activities or services, administrative activities, or personal services. Included are establishments for wholesale or retail sale of goods and services, restaurants, entertainment facilities, administrative or professional offices, gas stations, grocery stores, personal services, furniture stores, clothing stores, car sales, hotels and motels, and nursery or garden centers. Commercial land uses comprise 1.5% or more than 5,726 acres of the County’s unincorporated land area.
- **Industrial** – Land used to manufacture, assemble, process, or fabricate goods and/or to store or transport goods. Examples include manufacturing plants, industrial parks, truck terminals, and warehouses. Industrial land use comprises 0.5% or more than 1,917 acres of the total unincorporated County land area. Much of Oconee County’s industrial development has occurred along major transportation routes including U.S. Highway 123 and S.C. Highway 28 between Seneca and Walhalla, S.C. Highway 11 from Walhalla south past U.S. Highway 123, along Wells Highway near Seneca, and near Interstate 85.

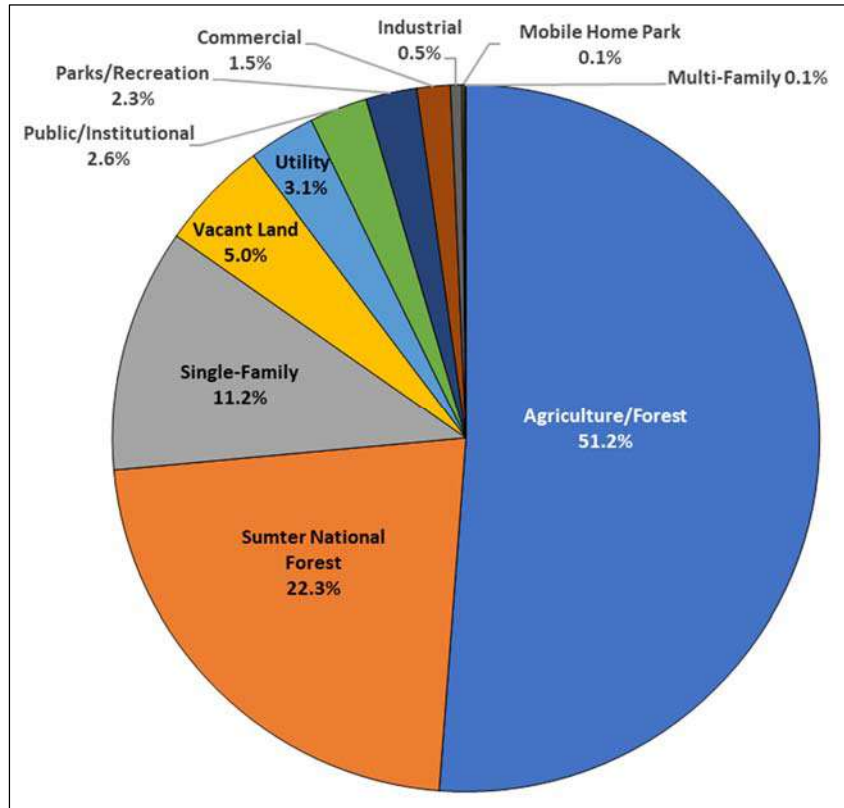


- ***Single-Family Residential*** – Land used for detached single-family residential structures and manufactured homes on individual properties. Properties that are less than five acres in size and are classified in the Oconee County Assessor’s database as agricultural for taxation purposes, but have residential improvements on the property, are included in this land use category. Single-family residential uses comprise 11.2% or nearly 41,892 acres of the unincorporated land area in Oconee County. While single-family residences are located throughout the County, much of the County’s single-family development is concentrated near the County’s municipalities and Lake Keowee and Lake Hartwell.
- ***Manufactured Home Parks*** – Land with improvements and utilities to accommodate the long-term parking of three or more manufactured homes. Eighty-six manufactured home parks have been identified, totaling more than 422 acres.
- ***Multi-Family Residential*** – Land used for residential structures other than those included in the Single-Family Residential land use category, including structures containing three or more dwelling units, duplexes, zero lot line developments, patio home developments, condominium developments, and townhouses. Higher density multi-family residential uses account for only 300 acres in the unincorporated area of the County.
- ***Parks and Recreation*** – Land used for public active and passive recreation or for open space preservation. Examples of park and recreation uses include ball fields, golf courses, tennis courts, parks, greenways, public gardens, playgrounds, conservation areas, nature preserves, state parks, wildlife management areas, and recreation centers and facilities. Residents of Oconee County have access to numerous recreational opportunities, with nearly 8,730 acres (2.3% of all unincorporated land area) classified as Parks and Recreation.
- ***Public and Institutional*** – Land used primarily for private, public, quasi-public, religious, philanthropic, or other activities undertaken to provide for the social, cultural, educational, health, or physical betterment of the community and public governance. Examples include schools, churches, hospitals, congregate care facilities (nursing homes), postsecondary institutions, community non-profits, libraries, cemeteries, and government offices. More than 9,901 acres of land (2.6% of all County unincorporated lands) are in Public and Institutional use in Oconee County. Uses in this category are located throughout the County, with many concentrated in the vicinity of Seneca and Walhalla and along major roads. Clemson University owns more than one-third of all public and institutional land in the unincorporated area of Oconee County. Most of this 3,314 acres is located west of Seneca near the Pickens County border and close to the University.
- ***Sumter National Forest*** – Lands within the Sumter National Forest. At more than 83,633 acres, these Federally-owned lands comprise the second largest land use in Oconee County, accounting for 22.3% of all unincorporated land area.
- ***Utility*** – Land used for utilities including electricity, natural gas, water, sewer, and communications. Utilities comprise 3.1% of all land use or almost 11,437 acres in unincorporated Oconee County. Duke energy is by far the largest single owner of land in utility use in the County at more than 4,200 acres.



- **Vacant Land**– Land area not developed for a specific use or assigned a land use classification. More than 18,745 acres (5% of all unincorporated land) is classified for land use planning purposes as vacant or undeveloped. However, much of the County’s 191,778 acres currently in Agriculture and Forestry use does not include physical improvements such as buildings and could also be considered undeveloped.

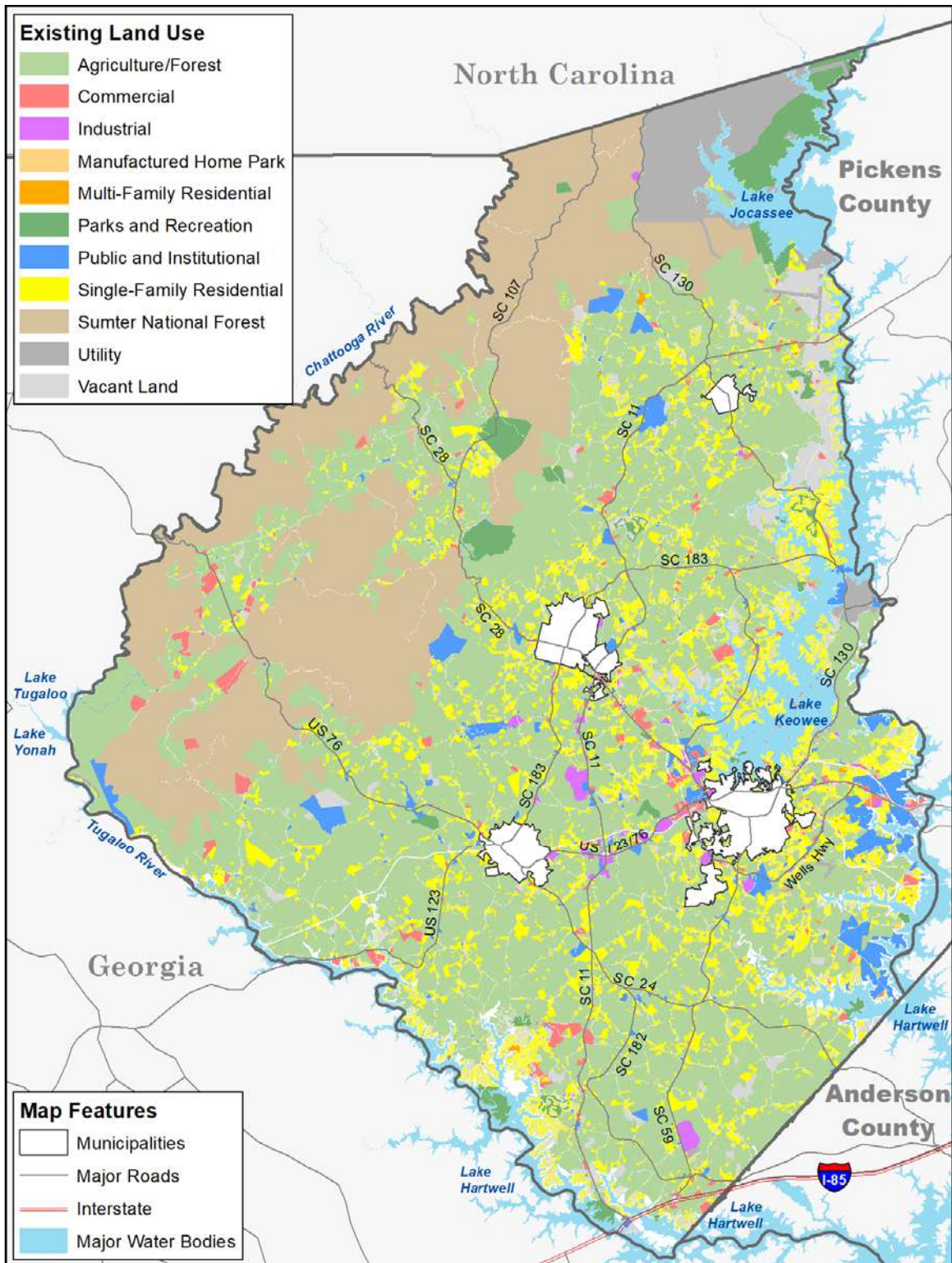
Figure 11-1. Existing Land Use Area Chart, 2019



Sources: Oconee County Assessor, November 2018; Oconee County GIS Manager, May 2019



Map 11-1. Existing Land Use Map



Sources: Oconee County Assessor, November 2018; Oconee County GIS Manager, May 2019



B. FUTURE LAND USE

The Future Land Use (FLU) Map is a reference for the physical development of Oconee County and sets the context and provides the vision for future growth and development in the County for the next ten years. As detailed in the Population and Housing Elements, by 2030 the Oconee County population is projected to increase by 7,678 persons, accompanied by nearly 3,335 new dwelling units.

1. Future Land Use Map

Development of the Future Land Use Map is anchored by land use data provided by the existing land use map and supplemented by staff knowledge of current development trends and potential future development areas. As illustrated in the Existing Land Use Map, the Sumter National Forest comprises a large percentage of all unincorporated land in Oconee County and much of the remaining land is primarily rural in nature (Map 11-1). Commercial areas, industrial development, and residential areas have evolved and matured over time and have been incorporated in the Future Land Use Map. For consistency, the following future land use categories used in the *2010 Comprehensive Plan for Oconee County* have been updated for use in the *2030 Comprehensive Plan* and are depicted in Map 11-2.

- ***Agricultural Preservation*** identifies areas deemed to be prime or special agriculture lands that are vital to the continuation of agricultural enterprise in Oconee County. Because agriculture-related activities typically impact most aspects of life within such areas, uses should be limited to those that are compatible with ongoing agricultural activity and can coexist with the secondary effects commonly associated with such activities.
- ***Rural/Agricultural*** identifies those areas characterized by a continuing rural lifestyle, farming, agricultural activities, and open lands. This area is generally sparsely populated, but includes pockets of commercial uses and mixed-use development. Although not identified as a preservation area, new uses should not negatively impact existing land uses.
- ***Rural Suburban*** identifies those areas that have undergone conversion from rural lands to a mix of uses, but remain predominantly characterized by a rural landscape and farming. Infrastructure sufficient to support additional development is reasonably accessible, and pockets of significant development exist throughout. New uses should be compatible with existing, with limited impact on the overall character of the area.
- ***Suburban Transitional*** identifies areas of densest development. These areas are well served by infrastructure and are suitable for continued development. New uses may vary in nature and intensity, but should not negatively impact existing land uses.
- ***Residential*** are those areas deemed to be appropriate for development primarily focused on residential uses. Such areas may contain significant clusters of existing residential developments, as well as pockets of agriculture, rural, commercial, and other land uses.



Although new uses may vary, they should not detract from the overall residential character of area, and not impose negative secondary impacts on nearby properties.

- **Parks and Recreation** lands are primarily reserved for recreational use, and as such are reasonably open to the public.
- **Industrial** areas are reserved for existing, planned, and future industrial or commercial uses. This in no way imposes a limitation on the location of such uses in other future land use categories or other land uses in the industrial category, where appropriate.
- **Sumter National Forest** includes all federally-owned and managed lands within the Sumter National Forest.

The analysis of future land use in Oconee County provided in Table 11-2 does not include land areas within the cities of Seneca, Walhalla, and Westminster and the towns of Salem and West Union because the County does not conduct land use planning and regulation within the incorporated borders. More than one-fifth of unincorporated land in Oconee County (83,633 acres) is within the *Sumter National Forest* and is not subject to local land use regulation. Nearly one-third of the total unincorporated land area in Oconee County (118,762.4 acres) is designated in the Future Land Use Map as *Rural/Agricultural* and 15.8% (59,183.2 acres) as *Agricultural Preservation*. Almost 10% of unincorporated Oconee County (36,892.1%) is more densely developed and designated as *Suburban Transitional*, while 9.7% is designated as *Residential* (36,437.9%) and 7.9% as *Rural Suburban* (29,587.3). Land designated as *Parks and Recreation* and *Industrial* in the Future Land Use Map comprise smaller percentages at 2.1% (8,044.3 acres) and 0.5% (1,942.3%), respectively.

Table 11-2. Future Unincorporated County Land Use by Area

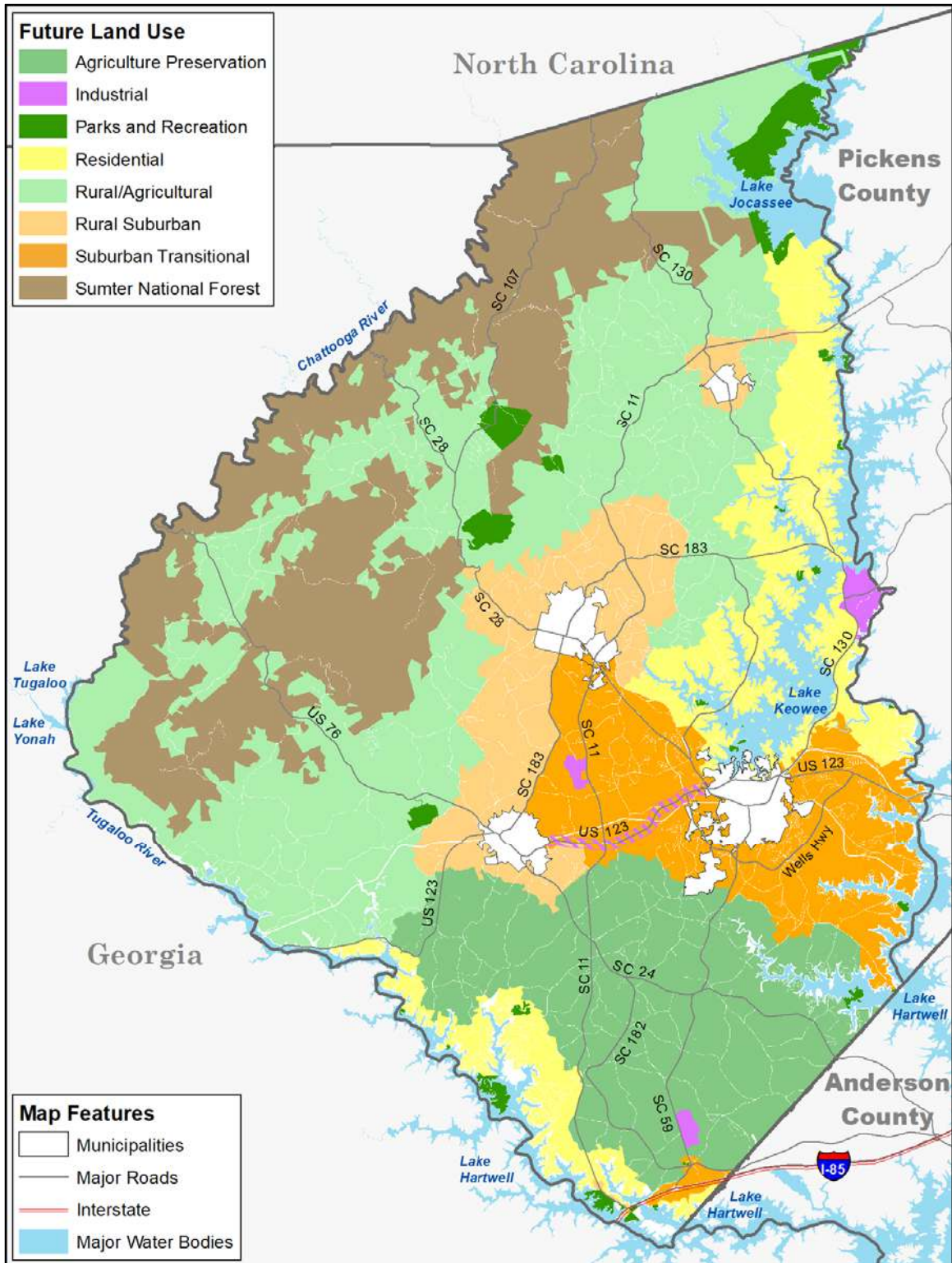
Future Land Use	Acres	%
Rural/Agricultural	118,762.4	31.7%
Sumter National Forest	83,633.4	22.3%
Agricultural Preservation	59,183.2	15.8%
Suburban Transitional	36,892.1	9.9%
Residential	36,437.9	9.7%
Rural Suburban	29,587.3	7.9%
Parks and Recreation	8,044.3	2.1%
Industrial	1,942.3	0.5%
Total	374,482.9	100.0%

Source: Oconee County Planning and Zoning Department, 2019

The U.S. Highway 123 corridor that connects Seneca and Westminster is designated primarily as *Suburban Transitional*, but is also designated as *Industrial* on the Future Land Use map. The intention of these dual designations is to encourage the continued development of a mixture of higher intensity uses including industrial, commercial, and support activities, with convenient access to U.S. Highway 123 and to S.C. Highway 11 that provides a direct connection to I-85 to the south.



Map 11-2. Future Land Use Map



Source: Oconee County Planning and Zoning Department, 2019



2. Future Development Opportunities and Challenges

Oconee County has an abundance of opportunities to support future growth and development. The County's strategic location along the busy I-85 corridor that connects the Greenville, Atlanta, and Charlotte metropolitan regions makes it attractive to prospective businesses and industries, as evidenced by the County's expanding manufacturing base. The County's location is also a draw for potential residents who are seeking a more rural or smaller town lifestyle within an easy drive of employment centers within Oconee County or in nearby Clemson, Greenville, and Anderson. Retirees are increasingly drawn to the area, whether looking for a more affordable option for lakeside or mountain living near thriving small cities and towns, a major metropolitan area, a major university, or in a quiet rural setting. The need for higher educational attainment and specialized job skills to meet the needs of existing and prospective higher wage industries and businesses is being addressed through job training programs and facilities provided at the new Oconee County campus of Tri County Technical College. The desirability of Oconee County as a place to live, work, and play is further enhanced by an abundance of natural, historic, and cultural resources and a strong sense of community.

A wide range of factors will shape this development potential including the economy, development intent of private property owners, affordability and obtainability of housing, regional growth trends, and the availability of infrastructure. As is the case in any growing community, Oconee County faces a number of challenges in the coming decade. However, each challenge also presents opportunities for positive growth and change.

A number of areas in the County are in transition in terms of character, density, and land uses. Formerly rural areas are transitioning to more suburban residential development. Student-oriented housing developments and accompanying commercial development are drawn to major corridors near Clemson University. New residents and visitors are increasingly attracted to the County's lakes, rivers, and other natural resources. Proximity to a major university and nearby metropolitan areas, coupled with its quiet rural character are also appealing. These changes boost the local economy and bring much needed commercial activity to Oconee County residents. However, increased housing density and associated commercial development will result in higher traffic volumes on key transportation routes and can increase travel times and cause congestion during peak hours. A growing and increasingly more diverse population in terms of age, income, and expectations will likely impact schools and infrastructure and can bring differing expectations for a range of issues such as public services, land use, recreation, and community appearance. The County has been proactive in addressing these issues and recently conducted a focused study of the U.S. Highway 123 corridor. Planning for growth along these corridors provides an opportunity to explore options to encourage development while ensuring traffic safety; accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, and transit; and create an attractive and functional environment for residents and visitors.

Oconee County enjoys mutually beneficial working relationships with its municipalities, adjacent jurisdictions such as the City of Clemson and Pickens County, Clemson University, Duke Power,



the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, home owners associations, and other organizations. With so many related groups and jurisdictions, it is challenging to maintain regular communication while building on established relationships and initiatives. However, the mutually dependent nature of these relationships provides opportunities to establish new and enhanced ways to share information and ideas and coordinate and cooperate where appropriate and needed. Such formal and informal lines of communication are necessary in emergency situations, but are also vital to providing reasonable and consistent land use planning and requirements in growth areas that span municipal boundaries and for planning for the provision of infrastructure, recreation, and services.

Oconee County is working with the OJRSA to expand the wastewater system to the Fair Play community in the I-85 area. This and other future infrastructure expansions will provide reliable water and sewer service to residents and businesses and enhance economic development efforts in these areas. However, as with the fast-growing major transportation corridors, opportunities for growth also present challenges in terms of increased traffic and associated transportation issues. Planning for growth in these areas provides opportunities to encourage new developments, businesses, and industries while ensuring traffic flow and safety and an attractive and productive addition to the community.

Oconee County has several ordinances in place related to land use regulation, including the *Zoning Enabling Ordinance* and *Unified Performance Standards* that regulate sexually-oriented businesses, airport height, communications towers, group residential developments, tattoo facilities, and signs, and include land development and subdivision regulations. Administration and enforcement of these regulations can pose a challenge to staff as they navigate multiple ordinances that include redundancies and contradictory requirements and definitions. However, this also presents an opportunity to consolidate land use regulations into one comprehensive document to improve clarity, remove duplication, ensure consistency, and streamline staff review and administration.

Housing affordability data in the *Housing Element* indicate that 45% of all renters and nearly 30% of all homeowners in Oconee County are cost-burdened, paying more than 30% of household income for homeowner costs or rent and associated costs such as utilities, taxes, and insurance. Local agency and community representatives indicate that it is difficult for young families, professionals, and others who would like to live and work in the County to find homes in moderate price ranges that are safe and in good condition. This presents an opportunity for the County to work with developers and public and private organizations to encourage and enable development of affordable housing options and to rehabilitate existing housing where feasible to meet this need.

Oconee County is blessed with unparalleled natural resources, as detailed in the *Natural Resources Element*. Additionally, the County has a rich agricultural tradition that continues to thrive. Stewardship of these resources creates both challenges and opportunities. Perhaps the most critical challenge is how to balance protection of these resources with encouragement of



appropriate and complimentary growth and development. Included in that challenge is the need to provide reasonable and safe access to the County's lakes and rivers for residents and visitors, while protecting the rights of private property owners. Much of the land in the County is in the Sumter National Forest, which protects many of the County's natural resources. Likewise, agricultural lands are in private ownership. However, as the County continues to grow, it has an opportunity to explore ways to incorporate procedures, guidelines, requirements, and educational programs that will protect natural resources and agriculture from incompatible or potentially harmful land uses without unduly limiting growth and development.

In addition to abundant natural resources, Oconee County residents and visitors have access to the Sumter National Forest, four State parks, three county parks, the Stumphouse Tunnel/Issaqueena Falls Park that includes a new Mountain Bike Park, and 193 miles of trails ranging in size from small spurs of less than a mile to the 77-mile Foothills Trail. Many of the trails lead hikers to nearly 150 waterfalls and other destinations as detailed in the *Natural Resources Element*. The Oconee passage of the Palmetto Trail connects Oconee State Park to the Oconee Station State Historical Site. These resources serve as the foundation of the opportunity to further incorporate trails and greenways to connect neighborhoods, parks, employment centers, essential services, and other key locations in the County and encourage travel alternatives such as biking and walking. In Walhalla, a greenway plan has been proposed that would connect the Stumphouse Tunnel Park to the City's downtown and serve as the western terminus of the Palmetto Trail. Transportation corridor studies can also accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, as was done in the County's U.S. Highway 123 Corridor Study.

The Land Use Element is the culmination of the goals, objectives, and implementation strategies developed in the other eight plan elements and provides a blueprint for the development of the community for the coming decade. The Future Land Use Map and the accompanying goals, objectives and implementation strategies provide the basis for policy decisions impacting the general location, density, and intensity of land uses. These are grounded in the overarching goals of enhancing and preserving community character; protecting natural, cultural and historic resources; reducing sprawl; ensuring adequate public services; promoting sound fiscal management and allocation of resources; and meeting long-term community needs for infrastructure, facilities, and employment opportunities.

The benefits of land use planning are many. Planning for growth enables the County to facilitate the delivery of more efficient and cost-effective services by encouraging development in areas where services already exist or can be more easily provided. The Plan also protects property values of residents and businesses, while encouraging additional investments by providing a reliable idea of how and where growth will occur. Sound planning helps balance the need for quality of life amenities and the economic activity that is necessary to sustain this quality of life for the County and its residents.



C. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The table of goals, objectives and implementation strategies (GOIS) summarizes the actions that will be undertaken in the coming decade to achieve the outcomes identified in the Land Use Element.

Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
Goal 11.1. Establish an efficient, equitable, and mutually compatible distribution of land uses that complements Oconee County’s traditionally rural lifestyle, yet supports sustainable economic development, protects the environment, and manages future growth and changes.		
Objective 11.1.1. Encourage development in a way that protects and preserves the County’s natural resources.		
<u>Strategy 11.1.1.1.</u> Review and update existing land use regulations as needed to facilitate development that preserves forests, prime agricultural lands, sensitive areas, and natural resources.	• Oconee County	Annually
<u>Strategy 11.1.1.2.</u> Explore ways to incorporate procedures, guidelines, requirements, and educational programs that will protect natural resources from incompatible or potentially harmful land uses without unduly limiting growth and development.	• Oconee County	Annually
Objective 11.1.2. Manage development in a manner that ensures the County’s natural resources and lifestyle enhance sustainable economic prosperity while respecting private property rights.		
<u>Strategy 11.1.2.1.</u> Utilize the zoning process to enhance development.	• Oconee County	Annually
<u>Strategy 11.1.2.2.</u> Coordinate urban/suburban development in Oconee County to ensure adequate infrastructure is in place to support balanced growth in primary growth areas, while minimizing urban sprawl and protecting natural resources, prime agricultural lands, and sensitive areas.	• Oconee County	Annually
<u>Strategy 11.1.2.3.</u> Review and consolidate land use regulations to improve clarity, remove duplication, ensure consistency, and streamline review and administration.	• Oconee County	Annually
<u>Strategy 11.1.2.4.</u> Use incentives, tools, and regulatory options for reducing and preventing conflict between incompatible land uses and reducing such issues in high growth areas.	• Oconee County	Annually
<u>Strategy 11.1.2.5.</u> Use corridor overlays, design guidelines, and performance standards to ensure the protection of the environment, community appearance, and property values while respecting private property rights.	• Oconee County	Annually
<u>Strategy 11.1.2.6.</u> Address on-premise and off-premise signs, and billboards, and their life-safety and visual impacts along roadways in the County.	• Oconee County	2025



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<u>Strategy 11.1.2.7.</u> Identify the location and density of RV parks within the County to determine if additional regulation is needed to manage traffic, ensure health and safety, and address environmental impacts, with particular emphasis on waterbodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2021
<u>Strategy 11.1.2.8.</u> Enable and promote the development of cluster subdivisions, with design features incorporating site amenities and resources such as open space, greenways, and wetland preserves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2025
<u>Strategy 11.1.2.9.</u> Consider requiring landscaping and buffer provisions for new non-residential development along specific corridors and within specific areas of the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2022
<u>Strategy 11.1.2.10.</u> Encourage landscaping, beautification, and repair of properties through volunteer community programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2022
Objective 11.1.3. Protect agricultural land through preservation and land use strategies designed to mitigate higher density residential and commercial development of rural farmlands.		
<u>Strategy 11.1.3.1.</u> Map prime and functioning agricultural properties to determine areas that may request protection from incompatible uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2021
<u>Strategy 11.1.3.2.</u> Implement as feasible the incorporation of voluntary mechanisms such as the use of conservation easements, purchase of development rights, and transfer of development rights to preserve agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually
<u>Strategy 11.1.3.3.</u> Utilize the zoning process to accommodate appropriate development as requested.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	Annually
Objective 11.1.4. Address the changes and emerging needs of areas transitioning to a more intensive land use.		
<u>Strategy 11.1.4.1.</u> Develop additional corridor plans focused on safety and design issues but with additional focus on reducing visual blight and inappropriate and incompatible development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2025
<u>Strategy 11.1.4.2.</u> Develop overlay districts, primarily along principle community entrances (highway corridors) to meet the individual needs of each district in areas such as signage, appearance, transportation needs, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2021
<u>Strategy 11.1.4.3.</u> Promote development that is consistent with the scenic character of S.C. Hwy. 11 through the incorporation of a corridor overlay, conditional use provisions, or other mechanisms; and explore ways to preserve and maintain tree lines and scenic vistas along S.C. Hwy. 11.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oconee County 	2021



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<p><u>Strategy 11.1.4.4.</u> Continue to work with the OJRSA and other infrastructure providers on expansions to serve residents and businesses and provide opportunities for economic growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • OJRSA • Infrastructure Providers 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 11.1.4.5.</u> Seek resources, plan for, and implement the innovative development and redevelopment of unincorporated areas such as Fair Play, Oakway, Newry and Utica.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 11.1.4.6.</u> Continue to seek new opportunities to coordinate, collaborate, and cooperate with municipalities, adjacent jurisdictions, and associated agencies and organizations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • Adjacent jurisdictions • Agencies and Organizations 	<p>Annually</p>
<p>Objective 11.1.5. Enable and promote a range of housing choices to meet the needs of residents that accommodate a variety of economic levels, age groups, and preferences.</p>		
<p><u>Strategy 11.1.5.1.</u> Work with developers and other public and private agencies and organizations to encourage and enable development of affordable housing options to meet current and projected housing needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Developers • Public and Private Agencies and Organizations 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 11.1.5.2.</u> Work with developers and other public and private agencies and organizations to encourage and enable the redevelopment and revitalization of dilapidated and unsafe housing in declining residential areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Developers • Public and Private Agencies and Organizations 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 11.1.5.3.</u> Encourage new and innovative approaches to residential development that will expand housing options.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>Annually</p>
<p>Objective 11.1.6. Expand and promote opportunities for recreation and access to natural resources and greenspaces.</p>		
<p><u>Strategy 11.1.6.1.</u> Work with the State, Sumter National Forest, Duke Energy, the Army Corps of Engineers, and other organizations to provide reasonable and safe access to the County's lakes and rivers for residents and visitors while protecting private property rights.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • State of South Carolina • Sumter National Forest • Duke Energy • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers • Other Related Organizations 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 11.1.6.2.</u> Explore partnerships and alternative methods of connecting residential, employment, recreation, other essential services, and communities such as greenways and trails.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 11.1.6.3.</u> Continue to seek and utilize resources and partnerships to connect to regional trail and park systems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • State of South Carolina • Park and Trail Providers 	<p>Annually</p>



Goals/Objectives/Strategies	Accountable Agencies	Time Frame for Evaluation
<p><u>Strategy 11.1.6.4.</u> Continue to cultivate eco-tourism opportunities in key areas such as near the new mountain bike facility at Stumphouse Tunnel and planned expansions of County parks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County • Municipalities • State of South Carolina • Sumter National Forest 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 11.1.6.5.</u> Seek opportunities to increase greenspaces, to include exploring requiring open space/greenspace as a component of new development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>Annually</p>
<p>Objective 11.1.7. Continue support of a comprehensive planning process to ensure that the citizens of Oconee County possess accurate inventories and analyses of existing county conditions and the opportunity to better manage future conditions.</p>		
<p><u>Strategy 11.1.7.1.</u> Review and update the components of the Oconee County Comprehensive Plan as needed, not restricted to the minimum time periods established in the S.C. Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act, as amended.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 11.1.7.2.</u> Expand public access to the County's geographic information system (GIS), emphasizing the accuracy and maintenance of data collected and the usability of the GIS website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>Annually</p>
<p><u>Strategy 11.1.7.3.</u> Utilize Assessor's data and GIS technology to better track development trends for use in planning for future growth and change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oconee County 	<p>Annually</p>





Oconee County Planning

LAND-USE

SITE-PLAN REVIEW

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Possible Corridor Planning working-group flow

1. Build working group-----1-2 meetings
2. Intent -----2-3 meetings
3. Planning Commission update
4. Traffic/Safety-----3-5 meetings
5. Planning Commission update
6. Landscaping-----3-5 meetings
7. Planning Commission update
8. Signage-----3-5 meetings
9. Planning Commission update
10. Building design standards-----3-5 meetings
11. Planning Commission update

Possible Corridor Planning working-group makeup

- A. Planning Commissioners 2-3 (Rotating out as topics change)
- B. Property/Business / Industry owners 2-5
- C. Stakeholder groups 2-5
- D. Staff 1-2
- E. Industry professionals as needed, such as:
 - SCDOT
 - OC Roads and Bridges
 - Landscapers
 - Signage professionals
 - Architects
 - Builders
 - other Planners